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Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

JANUARY 1999

America @work

The Nike Economy and the Corporate Agenda

ALSO INSIDE:

*Taking the
Initiative*

*A Class
Act*



VOICES

IDEAS AND VIEWS FROM YOU

Say What?

How will your union get the message to members about the "Nike Economy"?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Responses will appear in a future issue.

America@work

815 16th St., N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20006
Phone: 202-637-5010;
Fax: 202-508-6908;
e-mail: atwork@afcio.org

Here's What You Say

ABOUT THE STRATEGIES THAT WORKED BEST IN YOUR UNION'S GET-OUT-THE-VOTE EFFORT:

"First we did a mail-out from our business manager explaining the political situation in our state...[and sent a] list of endorsed candidates. We followed that up with a telephone call using the national COPE list. We called every name on the list first, and then the balance of the membership...."

"We're talking about 96 or 97 percent going out to vote. They were even coming into the local union office on Election Day with their 'I Voted' stickers on or calling and telling us that they had voted....I've never seen anything work so well in the past, and it was so simple."
—Pat Emmert, office manager, Ironworkers Local 402, West Palm Beach, Fla.

"I HAVE RETIRED...BUT STILL

want to continue receiving America@work. In my 35 years in the labor movement, this is the best publication the AFL-CIO has ever put out. Keep up the good work."

—John Hatfield, AFSCME Council 13, Harrisburg, Pa.

"I SHARE WITH MANY OF YOUR

members a growing sense of frustration with the Republican-controlled Congress for their persecution of Bill Clinton. It seems that neither the results of the midterm elections nor the opinion polls showing overwhelming public opposition to impeachment have any influence on this partisan lame-duck Congress. Many Republican lawmakers count on voter amnesia, believing that impeachment will not be a major issue in the year 2000 congressional elections."

—Michael Litt, Lake Oswego, Ore.

"WE MAY WELL LIFT A GLASS IN

honor of AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and Malden Mills Chief Executive Aaron Feuerstein as they are honored at Botto House. But the award is named in honor of Sol Stetin (not Stein), president of the Textile Workers of America at the time of its merger with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (now UNITE). Sol was a tireless fighter for working people who led his union into a merger with a larger union....I am sure that Sol would be delighted to be part of an AFL-CIO that has made organizing priority number one."

—Gretchen Donart, Seattle Union Now

AS THE UNION MOVEMENT CONTINUES TO GROW AND EVOLVE,

America@work seeks to offer up-to-date tools and strategies in a fresh and innovative format. This issue launches a new look for America@work, including a larger typeface. We'd like to know what you think about the new design. Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts to America@work, 815 16th St., N. W., Washington, D.C. 20006, fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: atwork@afcio.org.

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AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in America@work.

"I JUST FINISHED READING THE latest copy of America@work with the cover story on Social Security. I think it's a useful tool."

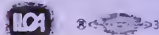
—Thomas Matzzie, Institute for America's Future, Washington, D.C.

America@work

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CONTENTS

9



8

ON THE ROAD TO 2000

AFL-CIO Executive Council members travel across the nation, visiting central labor councils and state federations to prepare the union movement for the next millennium

8



9

THE CORPORATE AGENDA

Instead of moving toward enlightened family leave policies, diversity in hiring and stable job environments, much of the corporate agenda is marked by shifting the burdens of corporate citizenship to workers

4 CURRENTS

Wal-Mart food stores? Bag it.

- In San Jose, a living wage.
- Graduate student employees on strike and more union action.

20 LIKE IT IS

Who's behind the attacks on working families?

21 OUT THERE

ATU members vote on a contract by phone.

- HERE holds fast for justice and more.

22 TOOLBOX

Social Security: Who needs it?

23 HOMEPAGE

Livelihood launches new television series.

- Union websites a link away.

15

TAKING THE INITIATIVE

A Washington State union-community coalition succeeded in passing the nation's highest minimum wage law—while creating a strong foundation for future action

17

A CLASS ACT

Union outreach in the classroom and at the worksite teaches students the value of collective action



15

5



Cover Illustration by Stuart Briers



Bag it: Workers in Missouri and Arkansas protested Wal-Mart's plans to enter the supermarket industry. AFL-CIO President Jahn Sweeney and UFCW President Doug Darity joined the December protests and denounced the giant retailer's history of low wages and anti-worker attacks.

MICHAEL O'ROURKE

UNITE's Ironclad Victory

More than 2,800 employees who wash and press sheets and tablecloths at 29 National Linen laundry facilities in nearly a dozen southern states—including Kentucky, Texas and Georgia—voted to join UNITE by a 70 percent margin in November. Key to UNITE's largest organizing victory in four years: bilingual organizers, multilingual pamphlets and regular conference



KRISTEN RIGGS

Pressed for success: Same 2,800 workers who wash, fold and press at 29 National Linen facilities in 11 states voted overwhelmingly to join UNITE.

calls to bridge the geographic divide. "The workers do hot, exhausting work for low pay and inferior benefits," says Bruce Raynor, UNITE secretary-treasurer. "They did a great job organizing themselves into a force to be reckoned with in their company. This is a huge victory for National Linen workers." @

High-Road Investing

Unionists and pension fund trustees explored ways to lay the groundwork for capital stewardship, encourage high-road investing and advance shareholder activism during the National Coordinating Committee for Multiemployer Plans meeting in December, which drew officers from some 20 AFL-CIO affiliates and more than 70 trustees of major pension funds.

Strengthening Social Security was a key focus of the conference, which featured a panel discussion on options to help close the projected Social Security deficit.

NCCMP Chairman Robert Georgine pointed to last year's successes resulting from shareholder activity, such as assisting the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees defeat of a Marriott International proposal that would have turned corporate control over to the Marriott

family and ousting Sunbeam CEO "Chainsaw" Al Dunlap.

Workshops and panel discussions focused on alternative investment options, restructuring workers' compensation, tax reform, trustee apprenticeships, IRS enforcement and compliance programs and the new Medicare+Choice program.

"The funds you shepherd offer working people education and training, comprehensive medical coverage and secured retirement," Georgine told attendees. @

No impeachment: Thousands of union members and members of religious and other groups rallied at the Capitol in Washington, D.C., in December to call on House members not to vote to impeach President Bill Clinton. "The politics of division must end, and some say the best way for that to happen is for the President to resign," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney after the vote was taken. "Nothing could be more wrong. To allow a band of right-wing partisans to hound from office the President we elected would subvert our democracy and our Constitution."



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE



NICK CRETIER

Strengthening Social Security: Meeting in Washington, D.C., more than 300 union activists kicked off an education and mobilization campaign to strengthen Social Security. Speaking at the November meeting, AFT President Sandra Feldman told participants the battle to strengthen Social Security, like last year's fight to defeat California's Proposition 226, is an opportunity to educate union members as part of a must-win campaign.

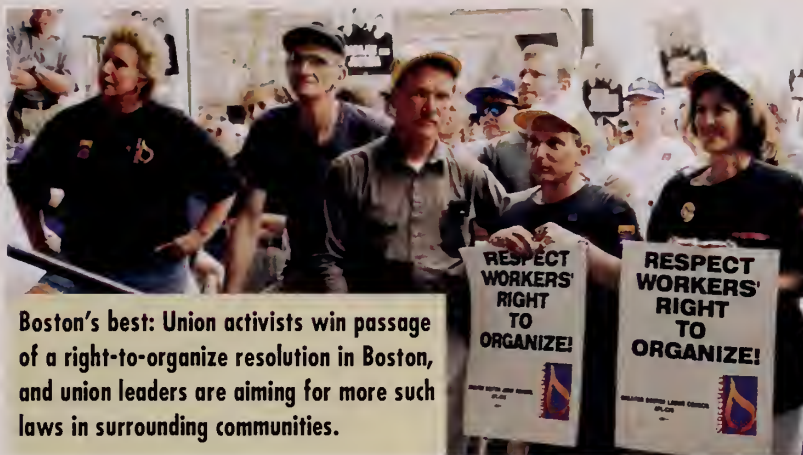
Betting on a Union Voice for Casino Workers

As a result of a joint effort by the Kenosha (Wis.) Central Labor Council and four unions, as many as 3,500 workers at a proposed Menominee Indian Nation casino now have winning odds to improve their lives through union representation after the casino begins operating.

The historic agreement, which fully respects the tribe's sovereignty, resulted from the efforts of a coalition spearheaded by the Kenosha Council—including AFSCME District Council 40, the Food and Commercial Workers, Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees and Professional and Technical Engineers. It will allow workers at the proposed Paradise Key Casino to organize and bargain collectively. The agreement also expands the rights of the casino employees beyond what is required under state and federal labor laws.

"Working together, we've been able to make sure that these future workers will have the chance for family-supporting jobs that will come as a result of unionization and from the investment in the community from the Menominee Indian Nation," says labor council President Bill Buzza.

That agreement follows an earlier project labor agreement between the Menominee Nation and the Southwestern Wisconsin Building and Construction Trades Council. ☐



Boston's best: Union activists win passage of a right-to-organize resolution in Boston, and union leaders are aiming for more such laws in surrounding communities.

SARAH NATHAN

BOSTON BACKS THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

Boston became the nation's largest city to pass a right-to-organize resolution, after the Greater Boston Labor Council successfully lobbied city leaders to throw their support behind a proposed federal

measure safeguarding workers' right to form unions. The Boston City Council voted unanimously in the fall to approve the measure—which was so popular that all 13 council members asked to be listed as cosponsors. Following the

victory, the labor council set to work to pass the resolution in each of the city's 22 surrounding communities. Already, the Boston suburbs of Somerville and Malden have signed on.

"We want the word to get out to employers and employees that workers have the right to organize without being harassed or fired," says Tony Romano, executive secretary of the labor council. The fight for

workers' right to come together in unions is critical.

Nationwide, 75 percent of private-sector employers aggressively oppose workers' efforts to organize unions, and 80 percent hire professional consultants to fight unionization, according to Cornell University Professor Kate Bronfenbrenner. ☐

SPOTLIGHT

Workers Show the Way in San Jose

When the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council's historic and sweeping living wage proposal became law last November, San Jose joined a growing list of municipalities with living wage laws—and demonstrated what can happen when a Union City mobilizes for action.

San Jose's new law calls for the nation's highest living wages for employees of city contractors (\$9.50 an hour with benefits or \$10.75 without), establishes a prospective contractor's labor history as a contract criterion and requires that companies taking over contracts, such as food service and janitorial contracts, offer jobs to the employees.

South Bay Business Manager Amy Dean says that the community and religious support the labor council generated—including backing from many ethnically owned small businesses and 4,000 congregants who signed support cards on a "Living Wage Sunday"—turned the expected 5-5 tie vote into a 7-3 win for workers.

San Jose joins more than two dozen other cities where workers have been successful in the fight for a living wage. Recently, Los Angeles expanded its living wage law to cover service workers at LAX Airport and other public

Living wage: A union-community coalition spearheaded by the South Bay Central Labor Council won passage of a law that means San Jose has the highest living wages for employees of city contractors in the nation.

facilities. In Detroit, voters were the first in the nation to pass a living wage referendum, and Washington voters approved the nation's largest minimum wage (see page 15). In New York, the Tompkins County Board of Representatives enacted a measure raising the wages of human service workers on county-funded projects to \$16,500 annually. Living wage campaigns continue in Miami-Dade County, Fla., the City of Madison and Dane County, Wis., Somerville, Mass., Greensboro, N.C., and several other communities across the country. ☐



EARL EDWARDS

A New Day Dawns for Sunrise Workers

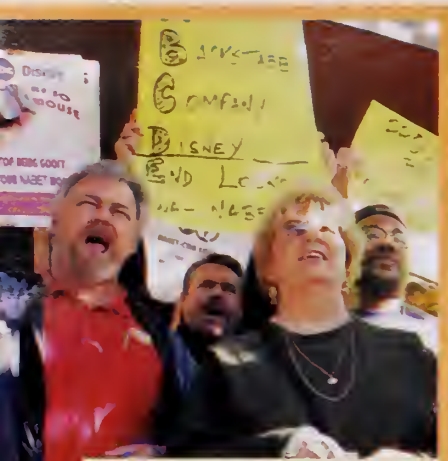
Nearly 2,500 workers at Columbia/HCA Sunrise Medical Center in Las Vegas voted overwhelmingly to join SEIU Local 1107 last month after Columbia/HCA agreed not to retaliate against employees who supported the union and not to take a stand against the union prior to the election.

"Columbia/HCA acted responsibly by entering into this agreement," says SEIU President Andrew Stern. "This country needs more companies that will make the same commitment to democracy that Columbia/HCA made here."

Winning the strong support of workers before entering discussions with management is key to securing employer

cooperation, says SEIU Local 1107 representative Maryanne Dawicki. Seventy-five percent of private-sector employers aggressively oppose workers who seek to form unions, according to Cornell University Professor Kate Bronfenbrenner. But when there is no employer interference, "workers will choose a union to benefit their families and their communities," says Stern.

Members from other unions in Las Vegas supported the Sunrise nurses, technicians, service employees and clerical workers, turning out for community events and sending letters of encouragement to the hospital workers. "It was solidarity at its best," says Dawicki. ☐



Holding the line: NABET-CWA technicians, camera operators, producers and writers are getting a boost from the other side of the camera in their struggle against ABC-TV, which locked out the workers in November. Stars of the weekday series "All My Children" donated part of their salaries and posted pro-worker messages on fan club lines, while Jay Leno, Tony Bennett and a host of politicians have turned down appearances on ABC.

DAVID BACON



Strike 101: Some 9,000 graduate student employees at the University of California walked out of the classroom and onto the picket line in November to protest the university's refusal to recognize their collective bargaining rights with the UAW. Students at the eight-campus UC system ended the strike Dec. 4 with a 45-day cooling-off period.



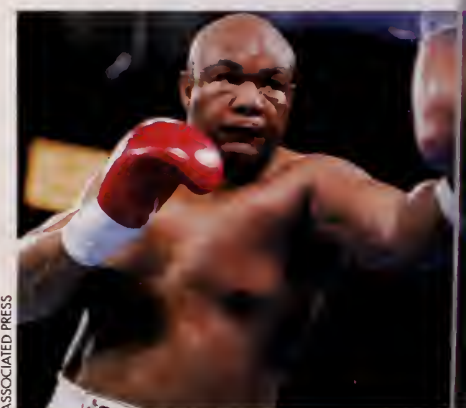
Toys for Union City tots: Bringing together union members, the religious community and local lawmakers, the Passaic County (N.J.) Central Labor Council hosted a holiday party for local children in conjunction with its Toys for Tots drive. Ray Stever, executive vice president of the labor council, worked with the Rev. Alfred Steele, a member of the state assembly, to plan the event. Putting together the coalition, says Stever, is what being a Union City is all about.

FRANK MARGIOTTA

A KNOCKOUT ORGANIZING EFFORT

When George Foreman and Larry Holmes step into the ring Jan. 23, the two former champions will launch a new era in boxing. Both fighters will use the match to announce A Fight for Freedom, the start of a union for professional boxers. The match will "draw attention to the need for pensions, health insurance and an end to the days when boxers finished their careers penniless, injured and with virtually no control over their own careers," says Paul Johnson, a former boxer and organizing chairman for the Committee to Organize Professional Boxing. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, the UAW, the Screen Actors Guild and the Professional Athletes all have expressed support for the boxers' union. Foreman's brother, Roy, is a member of the organizing committee.

Johnson says the public image of boxing has suffered because of the exploitation of boxers. "When the public believes that boxers are no longer being taken advantage of, only then will the marketing and promotion of the sport be free to grow," says Johnson. ☐



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Uppercut: The next time George Foreman enters the ring, he'll be a member of the new professional boxers' union, A Fight for Freedom.

A GLOBAL RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

Marking the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, workers in nearly every state joined together Dec. 10 in town hall meetings to help spread the word about the war employers routinely wage against working people who try to join together in unions and bargain collectively. Workers' right to organize unions is an

explicit part of the 1948 Human Rights Declaration, which states that all workers have "the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of [their] interests."

In the United States, where at least 10,000 workers are fired each year for organizing, human rights activists joined unionists to mark the anniversary by shining a light on abusive employer behavior. ☐

Central Americans Devastated by Mitch, Now Lose Jobs

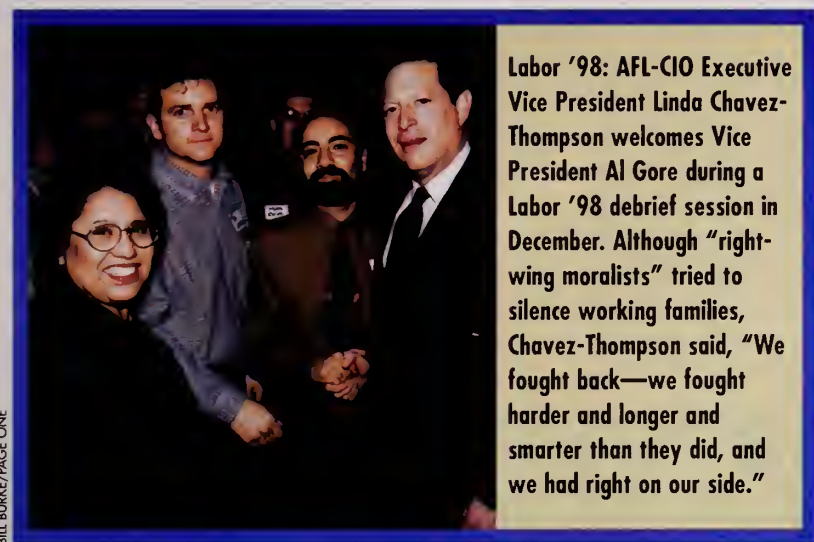
Months after Hurricane Mitch devastated Central America, leaving tens of thousands of workers and their families homeless, sick and starving, workers attempting to rebuild their lives face a new crisis: In the wake of the disaster, United Fruit and other companies are laying off workers, slashing wages and cutting health care. In Honduras, for example, more than 8,000 workers have had their contracts suspended because of the destruction of banana plantations.

In Guatemala, one major banana producer already has negotiated a two-year wage freeze, cutbacks in health care and the closing of some plantations. Another independent producer suspended negotiations

with the union on the pretext of hurricane damage, although damage to its facilities was slight, says Ben Davis, a Solidarity Center coordinator, who worked on relief efforts in Honduras and Guatemala.

The banana workers' unions fear that the major importers will shift production to other countries where unions are weaker and labor standards are lower.

The federation has established the AFL-CIO Central American Hurricane Relief Fund to assist with emergency medical care, food and basic housing needs. To contribute, send checks payable to Solidarity Center/Hurricane Relief, 1925 K St., N.W., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20006, Attention: Selma Padron. ☐



Labor '98: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson welcomes Vice President Al Gore during a Labor '98 debrief session in December. Although "right-wing moralists" tried to silence working families, Chavez-Thompson said, "We fought back—we fought harder and longer and smarter than they did, and we had right on our side."

Lights! Camera! Merge!

Members of the Screen Actors Guild and AFTRA are voting on a proposed merger that would create the nation's largest nonmusician performers' union. If 60 percent of the members approve the merger in a two-month referendum, which ends Jan. 25, the new union will be called SAG/AFTRA. The executive boards of both unions approved the merger, which was spurred by the proliferation of mergers and acquisitions in the entertainment industry that have resulted in both unions bargaining with ever-larger companies. ☐

OUT FRONT

On page 9 in this issue, you'll read about the corporate agenda that's shifting the burden of health care, pensions, taxes, job security, living wages and more from employers to workers. As we confront this trend in the organizing, bargaining and legislative arenas, it's really not issues we're fighting about—it's the lives and livelihood of working families. Remember the words of the people we'll be fighting for:

"My dad will never see us graduate, or see us get married, or see his grandchildren."—Scott LaJaunie, son of welder Tim LaJaunie, who was killed on the job at Avondale shipyard in March.

"I have friends who work in sweatshops with rats, dirty water and abusive supervisors. I could be working there, too, but I have a union."—Frances Ramos, a San Antonio garment worker.

"I have missed so many things because I was forced to work overtime. I missed Christmas programs, missed everything my daughter did...I had never been able to see any of my oldest child's activities. I always had to work."—Mike Rodriguez, a Steelworkers Local 2102 member at CF&I Steel.

"I didn't think I'd get fired. I was sick to my stomach that they would stoop so low to get rid of me. But someone had to do something. I have a daughter...I never want her to have to work in a place like this."—Kathy Saumier, union supporter at Landis Plastics, where workplace injuries prompted workers to try to organize. It took 13 months and a federal injunction to get her job back.

"I've worked 40 years. I'm tired and looking for a little rest. If they cut [Social Security] I don't know what I'd do. Private accounts would be hitting below the belt."—Eleanor Freer, Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers Local 118, Washington, D.C.

"I was always taught to get a job and work an honest day and you'll get a fair wage for your labor. It worked for my grandparents. It worked for my parents. Today it isn't so."—Ray Kimbro, a Chicago security officer.

"On the day that they fired me for supporting the union...they patted me down and took me to jail. This can't be America, because we have freedom of speech. The government says we have the right to organize if we choose to. Something needs to be done."—Betty Dumas, pipe fitter, Avondale shipyard (pictured above with President Sweeney).

These and a thousand more voices from the front are the fuel that keeps us fighting—and winning.

VOICES FROM THE FRONT



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

ON THE ROAD TO 2000

As the union movement approaches 2000, the AFL-CIO is searching for effective ways to build a stronger, more unified movement, with state and local central labor councils working to support organizing, increase political power and build coalitions in local communities.

As part of that effort, AFL-CIO Executive Council members who serve on Committee 2000 and the Committee on State and Local Central Bodies are traveling to state federations and central labor councils to discuss the roles of these bodies. Since October, EC members have traveled to Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Washington State, Idaho, North Carolina and Tennessee. This month, delegations visit Ohio and Nebraska.

"This is an effort to prepare the labor movement for the next century, to make our actions meaningful, efficient and successful in meeting the needs of our members," says Machinists President Tom Buffenbarger, who chairs the state and local central bodies committee. "The world is changing rapidly around us, and our big challenge is to learn how to structure ourselves so we can adapt quickly."

Meeting with union leaders, EC members are experiencing firsthand the range and diversity of building a strong coast-to-coast union movement.

WINNING THROUGH POLITICAL ACTION

EC members witnessed the power of union political action in North Carolina, where the state federation and local labor councils worked in tandem to contact union members during Labor '98. The result: defeat of Sen. Lauch Faircloth, a leading opponent of working families, and the election of John Edwards, who supports workers' issues. Every central labor council in the state took part in member-to-



One-on-one: IAM President Tom Buffenbarger talks with union members in Nashville.

member mobilization, with hundreds of union members joining phone banks and leafleting plant gates.

Through one-on-one contact with union members and get-out-the-vote efforts, New Hampshire's 41,000 unionists make sure working families' voices are heard. And they carry out full-time political action with part-time officers and one full-time staff member.

"They're doing fabulous things with a small, part-time staff. You can feel the dedication and enthusiasm," says Coalition of Labor Union Women President Gloria Johnson, one of the EC members who visited the Granite State.



In Nashville: Tennessee State Federation President James Neeley, CLUW President Gloria Johnson and TWU President Sonny Hall join UAW workers at Peterbilt Motors.

LESSONS LEARNED IN ORGANIZING

In October, council members visited Massachusetts, where there are more than 340,000 affiliated union members. Council members learned that the state federation and CLCs hold statewide meetings of organizers to share information and provide mutual support. "The organizers' roundtable provides a forum to work out disputes rather than having unions duke it out," says Doug Belanger, organizing director of UFCW Local 1445. "We create a 'yes, we can' attitude among organizers."

REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

State federations and labor councils have the ability to spread the message that working families care about each other and the communities in which they live and can build support for labor's issues, says Clayola Brown, UNITE vice president and EC member.

"Our challenge is looking at what the core program of state and local councils should be, as well as their relationship to the national unions, the AFL-CIO and to each other," says Marilyn Sneiderman, director of the AFL-CIO Field Mobilization Department.

These firsthand experiences will help shape the federation's efforts in the next century, Buffenbarger says. "When you look at how they use resources, the extent of their activities and their political involvement, it is amazing what they are able to accomplish." ☐

—James B. Parks

EC Members Celebrate UAW Pact

When Executive Council members traveled to Nashville in November, they planned to rally in support of 1,240 locked-out UAW workers at Peterbilt Motors. But the protest turned into a victory celebration when the company signed a tentative pact two days before the Nov. 24 rally. After three months of negotiations, both sides reached the agreement following a marathon 24-hour bargaining session. Workers ratified the contract on the day of the rally. "The timing of the trip couldn't have been better," says Richard Burnett, UAW Local 1832 president. The workers struck the truck assembly plant May 3 over wages and pension benefits and were locked out Sept. 14 despite an unconditional offer to return to work.

The support of the entire union movement helped both Peterbilt workers and SEIU Local 285 nursing home workers in Boston—who were joined on the picket line by EC members—reach good settlements for union members.

THE CORPORATE AGENDA

WHAT'S GOOD FOR WORKERS IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS. BUT TOO OFTEN, BIG BUSINESS FORGETS. INSTEAD OF CREATING STABLE JOB ENVIRONMENTS, RESPECTING THE DIGNITY OF WORKERS, SUPPORTING WORKERS' RIGHT TO ORGANIZE AND ENSURING DIVERSITY IN HIRING, MUCH OF THE CORPORATE AGENDA IS MARKED BY SHORTSIGHTED GREED AND LOW-ROAD POLICIES THAT RESULT IN SHIFTING THE BURDENS OF CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP TO WORKERS.



BY DAVID KAMERAS

W

hen Allied Signal took over the Textron Lycoming plant in Bridgeport, Conn., Robert Zaleski had more than eight years in as a toolmaker and was making \$22.60 an hour plus benefits. Then his work and that of 3,000 other workers moved to Phoenix, where wages and benefits are significantly lower. "It kind of collapsed the economy in the area," he says. "It was difficult to get a good-paying job. I used up all my savings to keep a roof over my head."

After bouncing between a number of lower-paying jobs, Zaleski was hired in 1998 by Gold Peak Lithium Batteries in Waterbury at pay and benefits nearly as good as at Textron. But in October, he lost that job, too, when production was moved to Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Now he faces working two or more part-time jobs to make ends meet.

Like Zaleski, tens of thousands of workers are laid off each year and—if the companies remain in the United States—face part-time, temporary or contingent work—for less pay and skimpier benefits.

While the economy is in its longest postwar recovery, not everyone is sharing in the prosperity.

- CEO pay skyrockets at almost double the rate of profits, far outstripping real earnings for workers,



DAVE KLUG



“ UNION MEMBERS DON'T MIND PAYING TAXES. THEY JUST THINK CORPORATIONS SHOULD PAY THEIR SHARE. ”

*Deanna Mobelini, hospital
medical records clerk and
member of Steelworkers
Local 14637*

which in turn barely keep pace with inflation.

- Productivity far outpaces real compensation—by about double the rate, according to an Economic Policy Institute analysis.
- Corporations save billions through tax breaks—about \$1.7 trillion over seven years, says Citizens for Tax Justice—while working families make up the difference.
- As health care quality and choice decrease, health care costs go up, with the average premium paid by workers increasing 146 percent between 1988 and 1996.
- Public schools scramble for funds to pay for repairs, supplies and teachers, even as risky experiments in privatized education drain public coffers and offer little educational return.
- Legislators, backed by some business interests, want to take the security out of Social Security as more private retirement plans no longer guarantee benefits.

Whether the issue is job security, pay, taxes, health care, education or retirement, a pattern has emerged throughout corporate America: Employers are finding new ways to shift financial risks to workers.

While it's the business of business to make money, corporations are changing the rules to maximize profits at the expense of workers. Much of the corporate agenda is marked by big tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, paid for by steep Medicare and Social Security cuts; privatization of the public sector; trade agreements that sell out workers; “right-to-work” laws; attempts to politically silence workers by funding anti-union legislative drives and the elimination of overtime pay, the 40-hour work week and health and safety protections.

The result? Workers and our communities get trampled in the name of enhancing the return on capital. Corporations seek to enrich their top executives and (sometimes) their shareholders—and everybody else falls through the cracks.

Ironically, business suffers as well. To achieve high profits and the short-term approval of shareholders, today's managers sacrifice the long-term financial health of their companies and the people they employ. Preoccupied with the short-term business cycle, corporations are adept at producing wealth for their officers and for the speculators who provide them with capital. Over time, companies are weakened by an absence of long-term planning and investments—and working Americans are denied their share of the wealth they help create.

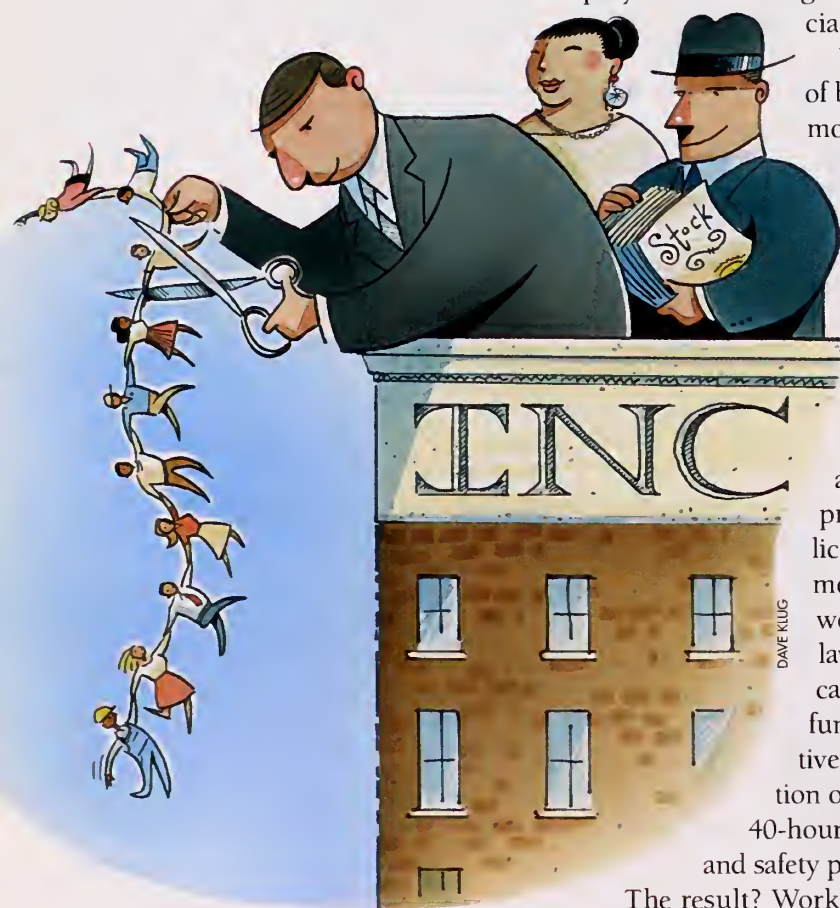
In many instances, corporations are further undermining workers by channeling huge contributions to politicians who will support anti-worker laws such as so-called right-to-work measures. Too many lawmakers have come to depend upon money, not the citizens they represent, to make laws.

WORK AND WAGES

Corporations have downsized, re-engineered and laid off hundreds of thousands of workers, yet the work still gets done—often by the same employees, who get hired back as part-time or temporary workers with diminished salaries and minimal or no benefits. Management shifts job insecurity and financial risks—all to boost the bottom line. Data from *Fortune* magazine indicate that while profits at the nation's 1,000 largest corporations jumped 30.7 percent from 1994 to 1996, employment there rose an anemic 2.3 percent. To do the work, corporations increasingly rely on contingent workers recruited for less pay after they've downsized their own stable full-time workforces. The result: 27 percent of today's workers are nonstandard. America's largest employer is the temporary agency Manpower Inc., with more than half a million workers.

Breadwinners also are working more for stagnant pay. The annual hours worked by a typical married-couple family with children jumped from 3,236 hours in 1979 to 3,604 in 1989—and then to 3,851 in 1996, according to the Economic Policy Institute. “American families today need two people working just to maintain for our children the same standards our parents did for their children,” says Ronda Wilson, a member of Communications Workers Local 1089 and a social services caseworker in Bergen County, N.J., who routinely sees families struggling to get by.

Wall Street frequently rewards corporate



downsizing with higher stock prices, which increases the value of executive compensation packages and encourages further cuts—a key reason why downsizing occurs even when companies are making money hand over fist. For example, despite record profits for four consecutive years, Caterpillar Inc. outsourced much of its work—and now hires new workers at 70 percent of current workers' salaries.

Workers now benefit from a modest increase in real earnings. Yet last November's average hourly wage of \$12.93, after adjusting for inflation, was still 9 percent less than it was in 1973. In 1965, the average chief executive made 44 times a typical factory worker's pay. Today, *Business Week* reports that same CEO makes 326 times the average factory worker's pay.

TAXES

While taxes are essential to finance government programs that help everyone, workers suffer when they pay more than their fair share. In recent years, corporations have received huge tax breaks—and workers are making up the difference. While taxes on capital gains, like run-ups in stock and real estate values, were cut in 1997, workers in 1998 were paying 11.4 percent more in personal income taxes than in 1997, according to revenue projections by the Congressional Budget Office. That far outpaced the 4.4 percent rise in corporate income taxes in the same period.

In addition to working longer and harder to

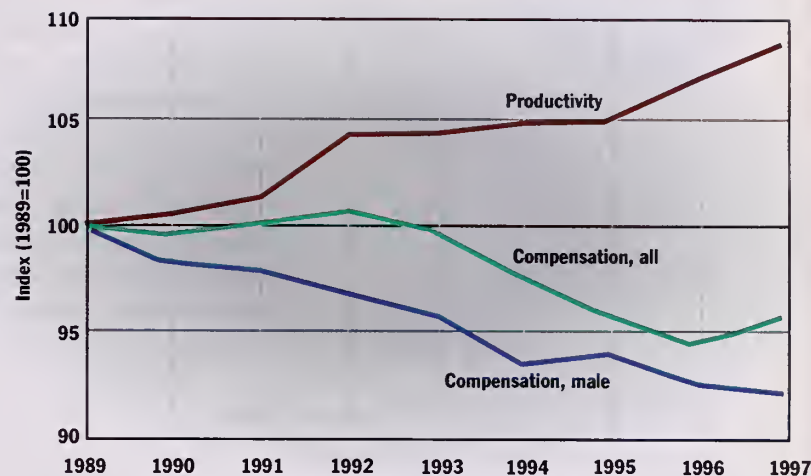
maintain income, Deanna Mobelini, a hospital medical records clerk and member of Steelworkers Local 14637 in Hazard, Ky., has lost tax deductions, such as interest on personal loans and credit card debt, that helped her make ends meet. Unlike corporations, Mobelini doesn't get tax breaks on depreciation, capital gains and mergers and acquisitions. "Union members don't mind paying taxes. They just think corporations should pay their share," Mobelini says.

The General Accounting Office found in 1993 that 1,555 U.S.-controlled corporations with assets of at least \$250 million—33.4 percent of the total—paid nothing in federal income taxes, despite sales averaging \$220 million a year.

HEALTH CARE

While the number of uninsured continues to grow, workers who have health coverage increasingly face a new risk: Employers are shifting health insurance costs to employees by lowering benefits and requir-

Productivity and Compensation* in the 1990s



*Because data on the median benefit package are unavailable, the average benefit proportion (average compensation divided by average wages and salaries) is assigned to the median worker. This method overstates the median worker's benefits.

Source: Economic Policy Institute

The Nike Economy

Corporations need to stay competitive in the new global economy. But that doesn't mean putting American workers in an unfair race with the lowest-paid, most impoverished workers in the world.

Multinationals are often based in the United States, but they respect no flag and are loyal to no one but their officers and shareholders. Case in point: Nike has been a corporate poster child for tolerating below-subsistence wages and dangerous working conditions for the 500,000 laborers at its contracted production facilities overseas—while selling its prestigious sports and consumer products at top dollar. Chiquita Brands, an American company, has crushed

labor unions at company-owned farms in Latin America and formed local front companies to further limit union activity.

That kind of "flexibility" may enhance corporate balance sheets. But it ignores the higher domestic unemployment and lower standard of living that can result while stripping workers, here and abroad, of the bargaining power they need to counterbalance multinational behemoths.

To fight this global corporate agenda, Americans must demand that trade agreements insist on basic worker rights. All workers everywhere—no matter how poor their country—should enjoy:

- The right to associate freely.

- The right to form unions and bargain collectively.
- The end of all forms of coerced, unfree labor—including child labor.
- The end of discrimination in the workplace.
- Acceptable conditions with respect to minimum wages, hours of work and occupational health and safety.

By penalizing countries that try to sell to us while polluting the air and water of workers within their own borders, we should demand that global corporations respect the environment.

As Chrysler workers are finding in Germany and Sprint workers are finding in Mexico, international labor solidarity can protect workers on both sides of a trading relationship.



THE CORPORATE AGENDA

ing workers to pay higher premiums and copayments.

Under managed care, the incentive for hospitals and HMOs is to maximize profits—which encourages them to push patients out the door early and limit types of treatment and medication. The result is that financial risk is shifted away from insurance companies—which are supposed to be in the business of protecting against risk—onto providers and, most important, patients.

“We don’t have a choice of who our doctors are anymore,” Mobelini says.

“They’ve taken away our freedom.”

And that’s if you have insurance. The average annual worker contribution for employee-only coverage was \$453 in 1996, according to a report by the Lewin Group. Depending on inflation and changes to the employer’s share, that figure is estimated to reach between \$955 and \$1,047 in 2002. In 1996, 8 million fewer Americans had employer-based coverage than in 1989, primarily due to

cost-shifting, according to an AFL-CIO study. Skyrocketing employee costs mean that many covered workers can’t afford dependent care coverage for their families, further shredding their economic security.

EDUCATION

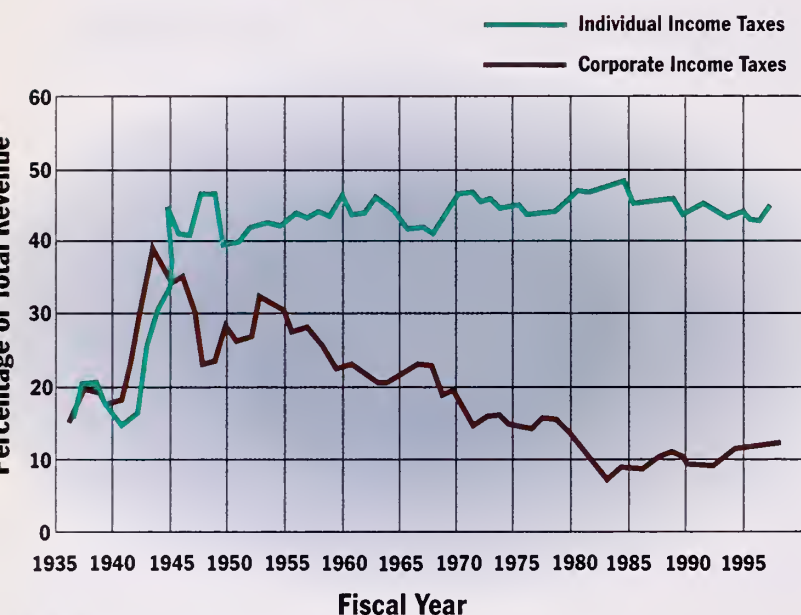
Public schooling rests on the notion that we all have a stake in educating the next generation. Through our support of public schools, all of us bear the risk that some families may be less able to contribute toward the costs of educating their children.

Here, too, private corporations squeeze money from the system and shift the risk to individual families and children. In many communities, private education companies offer beleaguered school systems the promise of big savings and quality teaching. But instead of cutting costs, some privatizers have been cutting corners instead.

“Their high-pressure sales tactics are slick, and they have the knack for wining and dining school officials to make the sale,” says James Melander, a high school teacher in Duluth, Minn. “But in the end, their product frequently isn’t all that it’s cracked up to be.”

When the Wilksburg, Pa., school district invited Alternative Public Schools Inc. to assume teaching and administrative responsibilities at Turner Elementary School, management demanded that 24 teachers be furloughed—and then hired less-experienced replacements, including several who were not licensed to teach, according to AFT. Math and reading

Individual and Corporate Income Taxes as a Percentage of Total Revenue



Source: Tax History

Corporate Welfare

There’s been a lot of attention to welfare reform in recent years—but the biggest welfare recipients have been overlooked.

With tax breaks and workfare subsidies, corporations and the executives that command them are the real welfare abusers.

- Corporate welfare in 1995 alone came to more than \$167 billion worth of government giveaways, such as tax breaks for mergers, capital gains, accelerated depreciation, tax-free bonds, business meals and entertainment and breaks for multinationals, insurance and financial institutions, according to the Corporate Welfare Project. The federal government also

directly subsidizes many industries and institutions to help promote the sale of American products. Citizens for Tax Justice expects “tax expenditures” for business and investment between 1995 and 1999 to reach \$336.4 billion.

- At the local level, government giveaways to lure businesses away from other areas or to spark investment can wind up robbing communities of needed revenues. In Youngstown, Ohio, for example, millions of dollars in tax breaks and a big land giveaway backfired when Corrections Corporation of America stopped paying taxes and sold the taxpayer-provided property to its own real estate investment

trust, reaping \$70 million in the process.

- Corporate income taxes have dropped from more than 27 cents of every federal revenue dollar in 1957 to 12 cents today, according to the Office of Management and Budget.
- CEO pay among 365 major U.S. companies jumped 35 percent in 1997, while profits rose only 5 percent, says *Business Week*.

“A Congress that is eager to challenge low-income welfare entitlements ought to be at least as tough—if not tougher—on welfare entitlements for the well-heeled and politically powerful ... to bring the budget deficit under control,” says CTJ Director Robert McIntyre.

scores fell in the first year amid charges by parents of academic and disciplinary problems.

Solving the nation's education dilemma with tempting shortcuts too often results in poorly preparing our children for their future. Privatization efforts jeopardize the resources school systems need to prepare students for the modern workplace. Current and future workers—not the private corporations peddling too-good-to-be-true solutions—assume the risk.

"We need to fix public schools the right way: by insisting on high academic standards, smaller classes and safe, clean schools and a highly qualified teaching staff," Melander says.

RETIREMENT

Retirement is sometimes described as a stool that rests on three legs: private pensions, Social Security and personal savings. Corporations already have shifted the risks of pensions to workers. Now they're sharpening their saws for Social Security—and the cost of changing to a private system would require slashing guaranteed benefits and raising the retirement age to 70 years or older.

Traditionally, the most common form of private pension has been the defined-benefit plans, in which the employer shoulders the investment risk and makes a regular fixed payment, usually based on length of service, age and pay at retirement. But enrollment by full-time workers in these plans is dropping—by 30 percent between 1983 and 1993. The growth of defined-contribution plans, in which workers have to make strategic decisions about investing but have no guaranteed payout, increasingly shifts the risk of financial loss to workers. The less income workers earn, the more likely their immediate need for money will force them to cash out or borrow against their retirement future. That means workers with the fewest resources may end up with little or no pensions.

"I think it's a sad thing to have a government that won't take care of its elderly," Wilson says.

For more than 60 years, Social Security has provided a guaranteed safety net for retirees with small or no pensions, as well as for millions of disabled workers and survivors of workers who die. Yet a significant segment of Wall Street stands to gain huge profits by transforming Social Security into a privatized worker-contribution plan. Not only would workers' retirement depend on the ups and downs of the stock market, administrative fees could eat up as much as 20 percent of their nest eggs.

Traditionally, Social Security has been the strongest leg of the retirement stool. By shifting the Social Security risk to workers, the corporate agenda would cut off the most dependable retirement support for workers.

THE UNION SOLUTION

Individually, workers have power to counter the muscle and resources that corporations can muster. Together, however, workers have the power to bring about real and lasting change. Through unions, workers created and won the Social Security system. The AFL worked hard on the state and federal levels for the protections that Social Security provides.

Strong unions benefit workers because they are effective in resisting attempts to boost profits at the expense of those who create them. Union workers earn more—34 percent more in 1997—than our nonunion counterparts, and we are more likely to get benefits. Highly organized industries, such as auto manufacturing and steel, mean strong union leverage at the collective bargaining table.

Unions use their investment resources to encourage corporations to become better citizens, neighbors and employers. For instance, through the efforts of the AFL-CIO and other groups, the Securities and Exchange Commission last May adopted rules that make it easier for shareholders to force consideration of proposals management would prefer to avoid, in such areas as job discrimination.

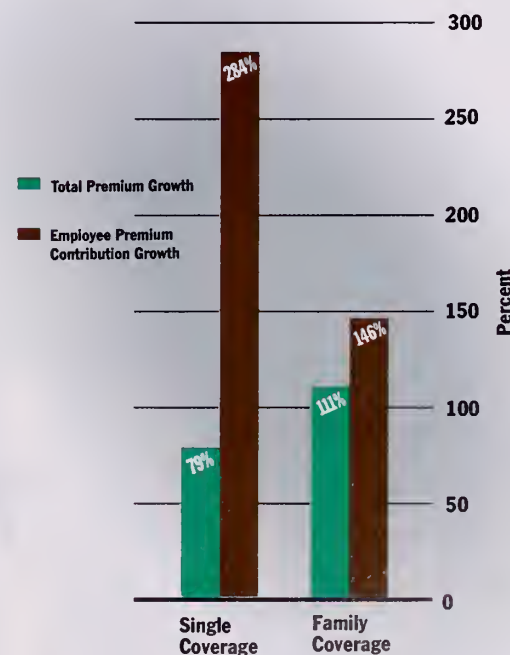
While Big Business has the big bucks, "our strength is in our people," says Mobelini, who helps inform her fellow unionists about working family issues through USWA's Rapid Response program. In the 1998 elections, corporate interests spent more than half a billion dollars on political contributions to candidates—12 times what unions spent. As union members proved in California by defeating a well-financed initiative to silence workers' voices and demonstrated again in Labor '98, unions provide collective strength that individuals cannot achieve. Together, we can elect worker-friendly politicians who work for working families. ☐

“AMERICAN FAMILIES TODAY NEED TWO PEOPLE WORKING JUST TO MAINTAIN FOR OUR CHILDREN THE SAME STANDARDS OUR PARENTS DID FOR THEIR CHILDREN.”

Ronda Wilson, a member of Communications Workers Local 1089

Employers Have Shifted Rising Health Costs to Working Families

Total Premium Growth Compared with Employee Premium Contribution Growth (1988–1996)



Source: Lewin Group, Inc. estimates.

Sneakers

BY BILL FLETCHER JR.

"Cool Capitalism" and Black America

In October 1968, I bought a pair of Pro-Keds at a store in the Bronx for \$8.30. Growing up in New York City, there were only two brands of sneakers to wear to be "cool": Converse and Pro-Keds. No other brand was acceptable.

But we did not kill for them.

In the last 25 years, the entire sneaker industry has changed dramatically. Converse and Pro-Keds were displaced as the dominant sneakers of choice, and a ferocious battle ensued—to capture the hearts and minds of youths first and then of other age groups.

Recently, when reading *The Sneaker Book*, by Tom Vanderbilt (New Press), it made me think about how urban youths, particularly blacks and Latinos, have been so successfully manipulated by the sneaker industry and advertising firms. And I started thinking about the issue of conscience and the black athlete.

It was also in 1968 that several black athletes made profound political statements. Two brothers, John Carlos and Tommy Smith, whose postures would be forever captured on film, raised clenched fists at the 1968 Olympics. They did this as a statement against the oppressive conditions faced by black America—and at great personal risk and sacrifice.

Reading *The Sneaker Book* evoked these memories because in 1968, black athletes were not advertising much of anything. Today, they are often the poster children for personal advancement, finesse and "cool." They are also the poster children for sneaker companies.

So what's wrong with advertising for sneaker companies? First, classy "athletic shoes" (as the companies would prefer we call them) start at \$70 and go up from there. Sneaker companies spend nearly \$800 million on advertising, actively aiming to convince consumers they need these shoes. Black youths are a major market because, simply put, black youths define "cool." While Nike claims that 87 percent of its domestic sales are to whites, this market is very influenced by the trends among black and Latino urban youths.

But black youths are sold not only a pair

of shoes, which many of them cannot afford. They are also sold an illusion, reinforced by creative marketing, that sneakers make the person.

Second, the sneaker industry made a concerted decision to leave the United States—and the possibility of a unionized workforce—and move offshore. For example, in Indonesia, one of the hotbeds of sneaker production, workers are paid roughly \$1.03 a day. Working conditions are horrendous, and workers historically have been denied the right to organize unions to assert their own interests.

This brings us back to the issue of conscience and the black athlete. The performance of too many of today's black athletes contrasts dramatically with the actions of Carlos and Smith at the 1968 Olympics. Major figures such as Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods feel no pressure to take a stand against sneaker companies.

The problem is not just that the sneaker companies are not producing shoes in the United States: The problem is that they have chosen to manipulate our youths and exploit Asian workers with not a shred of concern for either population. The solution: Sneaker companies must be required to sign a covenant that accepts the right of workers to form independent trade unions which are permitted to bargain for the rights and benefits of the workers they represent. There also must be a social clause that sets an international standard for basic wages and benefits.

Sneaker companies must return more of their profits to the communities they so actively target and from which they gain so much revenue.

Contributions from sneaker companies also could be directed toward community economic development programs. Given the economic devastation of so many inner cities, funds from sneaker companies could assist with alternative economic strategies that aim to rebuild our communities.

In this drama, black athletes play a key role. Their statement or silence on these profoundly moral questions influences millions of youths who look to them as role models. No type of smile makes up for the \$1.03 a day or for the broken dreams of young, black urban America. ☐



ILLUSTRATION BY STUART BRIERS

Bill Fletcher Jr. is the AFL-CIO Education Director. "Stepping Out" was excerpted from an article that originally appeared in the online publication, *The Black World Today* (www.tbwt.com).

A WASHINGTON STATE UNION-COMMUNITY COALITION SUCCEEDED IN PASSING THE NATION'S HIGHEST MINIMUM WAGE LAW—WHILE CREATING A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE ACTION

BY MIKE HALL

Moving by wheelchair through his Mount Lake Terrace, Wash., neighborhood last fall, 53-year-old Jerry Otis visited all 71 homes there to urge his neighbors to vote for an initiative that would boost the minimum wage for the Evergreen State's 285,000 lowest-paid workers.

Because of the work of Otis, a member of Lumber and Sawmill Local 2633, and thousands of other volunteers in a coalition of community, religious, civil rights, women's and legal groups brought together by the Washington State Labor Council, voters overwhelmingly approved I-688, the nation's first indexed minimum wage law. Unlike other state minimum wage measures and the federal minimum wage law, Washington's minimum wage will rise with the cost of living.

The new law will increase the state's minimum wage from \$4.90 an hour to \$5.70 in 1999, surpassing the federal level of \$5.15. When the wage is pegged at \$6.50 an hour in 2000, a full-time, low-wage worker who made \$5.15 an hour in 1998 will earn \$2,808 more every year. Not only will minimum-wage workers benefit, but the state's 300,000 workers who now earn less than

\$6.50 an hour will find it easier to pay the rent, buy food for their kids and buy medicine for their families.

The big November working families' victory in Washington and passage of a living wage ballot initiative in Detroit (see box, page 16) demonstrate how the union movement can generate substantial support from union members and lay the groundwork for future battles—while contributing to the entire community.

"We wanted to do something positive for the lowest-paid workers in our state, and we wanted to drive up turnout by giving workers something to vote for in November," says council President Rick Bender.

Maximum effort:
The Washington State Labor Council brought together a union-community coalition that won passage of a big boost in the state's minimum wage.



SEDE, LAGUENS AND HANBURGER

TAKING THE INITIATIVE

DETROIT VOTERS FIRST TO PASS A LIVING WAGE LAW

HERE'S HOW

The coalition drafted the nuts and bolts of the initiative and then test-drove it with a poll to determine public support. The results showed that not only did 68 percent back the proposed wage, but the public also agreed it should be indexed after 2000.

The next step was to rally public support to put the wage hike on the fall ballot—and that's where union members such as Otis played their first big role. "We decided we'd gather our signatures with volunteers. That hadn't been done in Washington for a long time," Bender says, referring to the recent proliferation of professional signature gatherers who, as paid-by-the-name workers, can easily misrepresent an initiative's intent, collect invalid signatures and distort the level of public support for a particular initiative.

After the council organized staff and set goals for each coalition member, more than 4,000 volunteers from the ranks of labor and the community hit the signature circuit. Otis, for example, not only worked his neighborhood but also became a fixture at the nearby Elderwood Mall, where he spent eight hours every weekend gathering signatures. The volunteers needed 179,000 signatures. At the signature turn-in ceremony on the state capitol steps, they presented Secretary of State Ralph Munrow with 288,000 signatures.

GETTING OUT THE VOTE

"When I talked to people and explained that it's just not fair for someone who works full-time to live in poverty, most people agreed," Otis says. That message was delivered statewide by building on the coalition's core of volunteers in a get-out-the-vote campaign that included 45 volunteer-staffed union phone banks and tens of thousands of worksite visits and precinct door knocks.

While the wage proposal generated great enthusiasm among the labor community, another poll confirmed the coalition's abil-

Union-community coalition efforts also succeeded in Detroit on Election Day when union and activist groups, including ACORN and the Interfaith Committee on Workers' Issues, "pulled all the partners together



Signed and sealed: Detroit union and community activists submit signatures supporting a living wage ballot initiative.

SHAWN ELLIS/METROPOLITAN LABOR NEWS

ity to boost general voter turnout by 4 percent. That's a lot of votes in hotly contested U.S. Senate, House and state races. On Election Day, 67 percent of the voters said "yes" to I-688. The state's 57 percent turnout was slightly lower than in 1994, but thanks to larger turnout of working family voters and coalition allies, worker-friendly candidates retook the state Senate, turned a 57-41 margin in the state House to a 49-49 split, defeated two anti-worker U.S. House members and reelected Sen. Patty Murray, who sports a 91 percent working families voting record.

Summing up the campaign, Bender says: "We took the offensive for a change and won—on lots of levels. The biggest is that tens of thousands of workers are going to get a raise. But beyond that, we energized and mobilized thousands of union mem-

getting out the vote in November."

They were right: On Election Day, an overwhelming 81 percent of the voters said Detroit's workers should earn a living wage, making Motor City voters the first in the nation to approve a living wage initiative. Despite a decrease in overall voter turnout, residents in low-income precincts voted at a higher rate than in past elections.

Short on funds, union members and coalition partners spent four summer weekends fanning out through Detroit neighborhoods to collect the signatures needed to put the initiative on the ballot. The measure requires businesses with city contracts or specific subsidies to pay workers \$7.70 an hour plus benefits or \$9.63 an hour without benefits.

The public's strong sup-

port for a living wage caught the attention of business groups, which began a disinformation campaign. At the same time, the city's two newspapers—the Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press, where 1,200 workers remain locked out almost two years after ending their strike—urged the measure's defeat.


While Detroit's unions made sure working families were educated about the issue, Scribner says Detroit's faith community played a huge role. Churches and synagogues held three Living Wage Sundays that included sermons, roundtable discussions and literature drops.

For more information on launching a communitywide political action campaign, contact the AFL-CIO Political Department, 202-637-5101. ☐

bers because we had something to fight for. We built strong bonds with our community partners, and I think we showed the overall public that the labor movement works for everybody in the community. We all win." ☐

"We showed the overall public that the labor movement works for everybody in the community."

—RICK BENDER, PRESIDENT, WASHINGTON STATE LABOR COUNCIL



Making the grade: In Los Angeles, Linda Tubach is part of a coalition of teachers' unions that runs week-long simulations in which students organize unions, bargain contracts and occasionally go on strike.

CHRIS DENNISON

A Class ACT

BY LAUREEN
LAZAROVICI

Union outreach
in the classroom
and at the
worksite teaches
students the value
of collective action.

AT AGE 19, CAROLYN DREW IS ALREADY A CHIEF STEWARD. BUT SHE DOESN'T WORK in a factory or at an office building. She's part of the High School Workers' Initiative run by the Northeast Indiana Central Labor Council, which aims to reach young people when they first enter the workplace so that they can "understand the notion of a social contract," says Tom Lewandowski, president of the labor council.

Students learn labor law through the program, enabling them to be a resource for their peers, many of whom face unfair and unsafe working conditions—like the father Drew heard about who managed a restaurant and paid his daughter the equivalent of one or two dollars an hour under the table to work there. Last year,

Drew and several other stewards surveyed their peers, wrote and distributed a high school workers' guide, staffed a hotline and maintained a database of child labor law violators. This month, the project will hire four stewards at area high schools, all coordinated by Drew, who now attends Indiana-Purdue University at Fort Wayne.

Recognizing that today's high school students are tomorrow's workers, unions are finding innovative ways to get that message to young people in classrooms across the nation.

While the Northeast Indiana Central Labor Council trains "shop stewards" for the high school workers who work in fast food restaurants and grocery stores, in southern California teachers run week-long simulations on organizing and bargaining. The UAW's Southern Pennsylvania speakers' bureau trains members to spread the word about deindustrialization, NAFTA, child labor and sweatshops. These initiatives are a few of the union-backed programs helping to lay the groundwork for future workers who will

"It is vital that high school students develop union awareness for their future as workers." —LINDA TUBACH, UNITED TEACHERS-LOS ANGELES

know their rights—and be prepared to fight for those rights by joining together in unions. "We've got to get the kids when their minds are open," says William Hill, UAW speakers' bureau coordinator.

"These types of programs are crucial for providing education to the future workforce about the role and importance of unions," says Kent Wong, director of the Center for Labor Research and Education at the University of California, Los Angeles, which helps coordinate the simulations. "We shouldn't wait until they get on the job before starting union education."

High school students, after all, are not only future workers but current ones. "These kids are unorganized workers just like any other unorganized workers," says Lewandowski. "They are one

of the most exploited parts of the labor market." Violations of child labor laws are rampant, he says, especially involving teens working long hours. Because businesses often view high school students as a short-term labor pool, "those workers need representation," he adds. At the same time, students and their parents benefit when educated about workers' rights. When Lewandowski began interviewing students and their parents about work issues to put together a program for the High School Workers' Initiative, he found "they didn't know their rights were being violated." *The High School Workers Guide* and student stewards give students the tools to help them if their employer violates their rights, such as not paying them overtime or not improving unsafe working conditions. The High School Workers' Initiative also appeals to rank-and-file members of the labor council. "The students get an ovation every time they come to our meetings," Lewandowski says. "It fires us up."

STUDENTS ON STRIKE

While the Fort Wayne program focuses on actual worksites, in Los Angeles a coalition of teachers' unions runs week-long simulations in which students organize unions and bargain contracts. The program began in 1991 as an all-day, citywide event involving student teams of "workers" and "managers" negotiating a contract at a fictitious school, hospital or factory. Now it covers organizing and bargaining and features reenactments of historical strikes at dozens of high schools. Local union leaders serve as coaches.


"The kids are really receptive to the issues and open to an enlightened approach to management," says Linda Tubach, a member of United Teachers-Los Angeles who's taking the


year off to coordinate the project, which receives funding from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. Most of the time, the teams come to agreement and sign a contract, although occasionally there is a "strike." Students also learn that both sides don't get equal time, and that management has a captive audience every workday, Tubach says. "Afterward, the students say they've learned how important unions are. It is vital that high school students develop union awareness for their future as workers." The students aren't the only ones having a good time. "It is the best teaching experience I've ever had," Tubach says.


UAW SPEAKERS' BUREAU


UAW member Charles Hannum has been a member of the UAW's Southern Pennsylvania speakers' bureau for 20 years. Hannum is one of more than 350 speakers who have volunteered over the program's 35 years. He talks to approximately 60 groups of schoolchildren a year, mostly about exploitative child labor practices around the world. Hannum's first appearance—in front of 900 students—made him so nervous he inadvertently introduced himself as Leonard Woodcock, then-president of the UAW. But Hannum's fear of public speaking disappeared soon after. "I

Resources

 Southeastern Pennsylvania UAW Community Action Program Council, 1375 Virginia Dr., #201, Fort Washington, Penn. 19304, 215-591-0830.

 High School Workers' Initiative, Northeast Indiana Central Labor Council, 1520 Profit Dr., Fort Wayne, Ind. 46808, 219-482-5588. E-mail: NEICLC@aol.com.

 Collective Bargaining Education Project, c/o United Teachers-Los Angeles, 3303 Wilshire Blvd., 10th Floor, Los Angeles, Calif. 90010, 213-386-3144.

 Bringing Labor into the K-12 Curriculum: A Resource Guide for Teachers, California Federation of Teachers, Labor in the Schools Committee, One Kaiser Plaza, Suite 1440, Oakland, Calif. 94612, 510-832-8812. @

love talking to the kids about labor law and the economy and all sorts of other topics," he says.

Unions' student outreach projects have inspired students and the union activists who work with them to deepen their involvement in the labor movement. Drew, for instance, is studying to be a teacher and wants to start her own labor studies course. In Los Angeles, Wong says one student who participated in a bargaining simulation is now a teacher and wants to use the program at her school. And Hannum says he began a second career as a mediator after retiring from the UAW after the speakers' bureau program gave him the desire "to read more and educate myself on lots of issues."

Hill, who runs the speakers' bureau, says that programs for students also build union members' leadership skills. "To make this successful, we have to be educated and committed labor leaders," he says. "If we don't do it, we are making a tremendous mistake." ☐

Building skills: The school-to-work project run by the Cincinnati Central Labor Council enables students to expand their job skills and learn about the union movement through apprenticeship programs in areas such as carpentry and bricklaying.



GREAT OAKS INSTITUTE

Cincinnati School-to-Work

UNION LEADERS IN THE BUILDING TRADES often have a unique opportunity to help students expand their job skills and learn about the union movement by partnering with vocational schools and offering apprenticeship programs in carpentry, bricklaying, painting, pipe fitting and related fields.

The school-to-work project run by the Cincinnati Central Labor Council is one such example. With the Great Oaks Institute of Technical and Career Development, the labor council ran a week-long "construction camp" for 12 students, two teachers and two counselors in which ninth-graders and their mentors built a storage shed for sports equipment.

"They took pride in it because it was going to be for their school," says Cliff Migal, Great Oaks CEO. "It was a way to introduce them to the world of construction." The labor council also hosts meetings for parents and teachers. "The biggest problem we faced was parents and teachers not understanding that a building trade is a career that takes a lot of training," says Harry Roedersheimer, who coordinates the school-to-work project for the group.

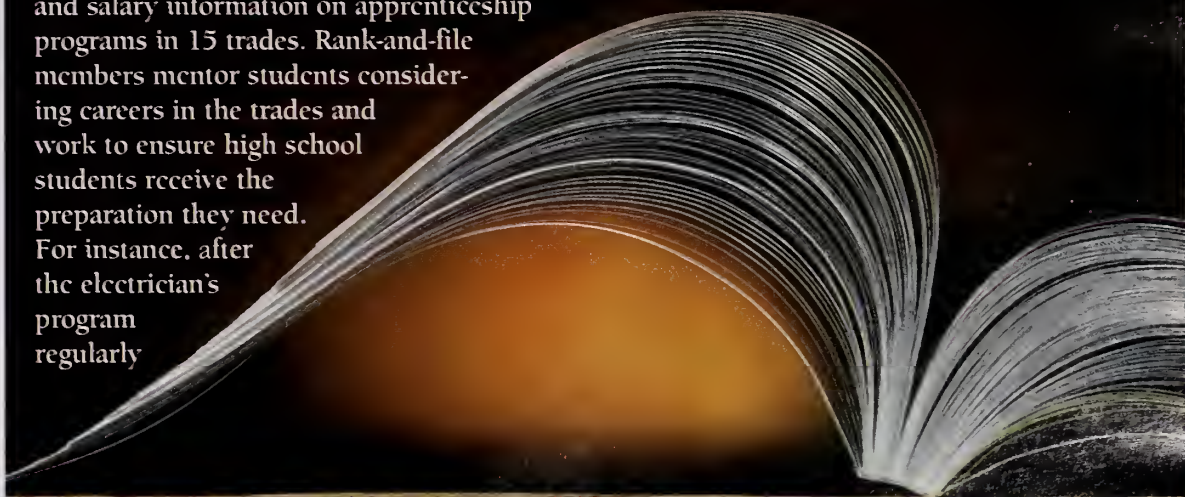
The council also publishes a comprehensive guide that includes applications and salary information on apprenticeship programs in 15 trades. Rank-and-file members mentor students considering careers in the trades and work to ensure high school students receive the preparation they need. For instance, after the electrician's program regularly

received applications from kids who had not taken enough algebra to master the formulas they would need on the job, union officials successfully lobbied local and state school board members to strengthen math requirements—at a time when educators were considering dropping the algebra requirement.

"Once you learn a trade, no one can take it away from you," says Walter Zimmer, a retired member of the Electrical Workers Local 212 who serves as a mentor. "It anchors you, and the kids understand that." School-to-work projects can also boost a union's profile in the community. Union involvement "has permitted the average person in the schools to take a second look and say, 'The unions are out here to help,'" says Migal.

For more information, contact the Cincinnati Central Labor Council, 215 E. 9th St., Cincinnati, Ohio 45202, 513-421-1846. ☐

Does your building trades council run a school-to-work project you'd like other unions to know about? Contact America@work, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, 202-637-5037, atwork@aflcio.org.



To continue winning, working families need to stay ahead of anti-worker groups by knowing who they are, who funds them and what issues they back.

Working families scored major victories last year, beating back paycheck deception ballot initiatives in states such as California, where union members and their allies came from behind to soundly defeat Proposition 226. But the well-financed, well-organized national network of ultraconservative individuals, organizations and foundations that promoted Prop. 226 and other anti-worker issues is still strong—and poised to push its agenda well into the next century.

With innocent-sounding names like Campaign for Working Families, the American Legislative Exchange Council and the Family Research Council, most of these groups have been responsible for pursuing anti-worker issues in cities, states and Congress

THE ASSAULT ON WORKING FAMILIES

for a dozen years or more. They are the driving forces behind a slew of radical right-wing issues such as privatizing government services, replacing public education with vouchers, repealing minimum wage and overtime laws, eliminating guaranteed pensions and nullifying collective bargaining and prevailing wage laws.

As new battles shape up over the future of Social Security, the rights of part-time and contract employees and workers' rights in a global economy, the ultraconservative network is gearing up again to fight the interests of working people.

Two new reports describe these anti-worker groups. To continue winning, working families need to stay ahead of these groups by knowing who they are, who funds them and what issues they back. We also must be able to anticipate—rather than only react to—their initiatives.

Deep-pocket players

In *Which Groups Are Leading the Assault on Working Families and What Is on Their Agenda*, AFSCME looks at trends in the anti-union, anti-government agenda and provides a state-by-state report on anti-

working families proposals.

The Real Story Behind 'Paycheck Protection'—The Hidden Link Between Anti-Worker and Anti-Public Education Initiatives: An Anatomy of the Far Right, by the National Education Association, catalogues the web of groups and individuals leading the aggressive anti-worker activities.

Both reports also identify some key players and groups that include:

- The American Legislative Exchange Council, founded by archconservative activist Paul Weyrich, which provides model legislation to state lawmakers to privatize government services and repeal public-sector collective bargaining laws.
- Grover Norquist, the millionaire head of Americans for Tax Reform, which contributed \$4 million to conservative Republican congressional candidates in 1996 and was the largest contributor—of \$441,000—to the Prop. 226 effort in California.
- John Walton, of the Wal-Mart fortune, who gave \$360,000 to Prop. 226 and has pledged to chip in at least \$50 million for a national school voucher campaign. Walton also is a major contributor to the Claremont Institute, which ran pro-Prop. 226 ads.

Republican members of Congress. The AEI is one of the leading proponents of the total privatization of the Social Security system.

Fighting back

Each report details union fight-back strategies, recommending that workers:

- Keep up with the activities of anti-worker groups in your state. Get on their mailing lists or monitor their websites.
- Share information about the groups with other activists and lobbyists.
- Form coalitions to mount pressure to stop the efforts before they become full-blown campaigns.
- Promote an agenda that taps into the same working family concerns as those touted by anti-worker forces, but which offers worker-friendly alternatives.

For copies of *Which Groups...*, contact AFSCME's Public Policy Department at 202-429-1155. Copies of *The Real Story Behind 'Paycheck Protection'* are available for \$6 each from NEA Communications, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Attention: Barbara Greenan. ☐

—James B. Parks

**FOR RATIFICATION,
PRESS 1**

NOW

A DESIGN FOR ORGANIZING

A work of art commissioned by Paula Stromberg, communications director for Office and Professional Employees Local 378 in Burnaby, British Columbia, not only served Stromberg's goal to "capture the union spirit" on her office wall, it now lives on as the design basis of the local's organizing material.

The original piece by Canadian artist Caffyn Kelley, a three-paneled fabric painting, portrays the power of workers' collective action. Two side panels incorporate Stromberg's photographs of union members at rallies, contract ratification meetings and other union events. Artist Gary Kingman is adapting the art for Local 378's organizing materials.

Working where she can witness the power of unions to ensure fairness and dignity, Stromberg says, inspired her to spend her personal money "on art that highlights labor's magnificent contributions to society." @



The 7,000 members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1700, the nationwide local for Greyhound drivers and mechanics, ratified their new 64-month contract without ever leaving home.

The members took part in the union's first telephone contract vote by dialing an 800 number and punching in their Social Security number and a personal identification number, according to Wes Ponsford, Local 1700's secretary-treasurer. "This is the wave of the future," says Ponsford. "Ninety percent of our members thought it was a good idea."

Ponsford says balloting results were known minutes after the voting ended. Voter participation was 62 percent, roughly the same as with a paper ballot.

The cost of direct-dial voting was less than half of what the union would have spent for mail balloting. "We normally would spend around \$50,000 for a nationwide mail ballot,"

Ponsford says, while direct-dial voting will cost between \$15,000 and \$18,000.

The New York-based Segal Co. developed the telephone balloting system for the union. @

Hungry for Justice

The table at the Clark County Government Amphitheater offered a festive Thanksgiving spread—but the plates in front of the children were empty. The symbolic Fast for Justice brought attention to the plight of the children's parents who are among the 200,000 men and women who were stripped of their right to work by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service in September. The event was sponsored by Fair Treatment for Immigrants, with the support of Culinary Workers/HERE Local 226 and Latino and immigrants' rights groups in Nevada.

Malena Burnett, an FTI representative, explains that most workers who were denied work permits had been legally working in this country for more than 10 years on annually issued permits. Following a change in immigration rules, the INS refused to re-issue those permits in September. Since then, "families in Las Vegas and throughout the country have been

struggling to make ends meet," Burnett says. Their children, who are American citizens, should have the same rights and privileges as all U.S. residents, Burnett says, "but they are being made to suffer."

Mario Rocha, Local 226 business agent, notes that many of those denied work permits are union members, including 2,000 Local 226 members who have been unable to work since the INS ruling. A coalition of unions and immigrant and civil rights groups is urging the INS to reverse its decision. @



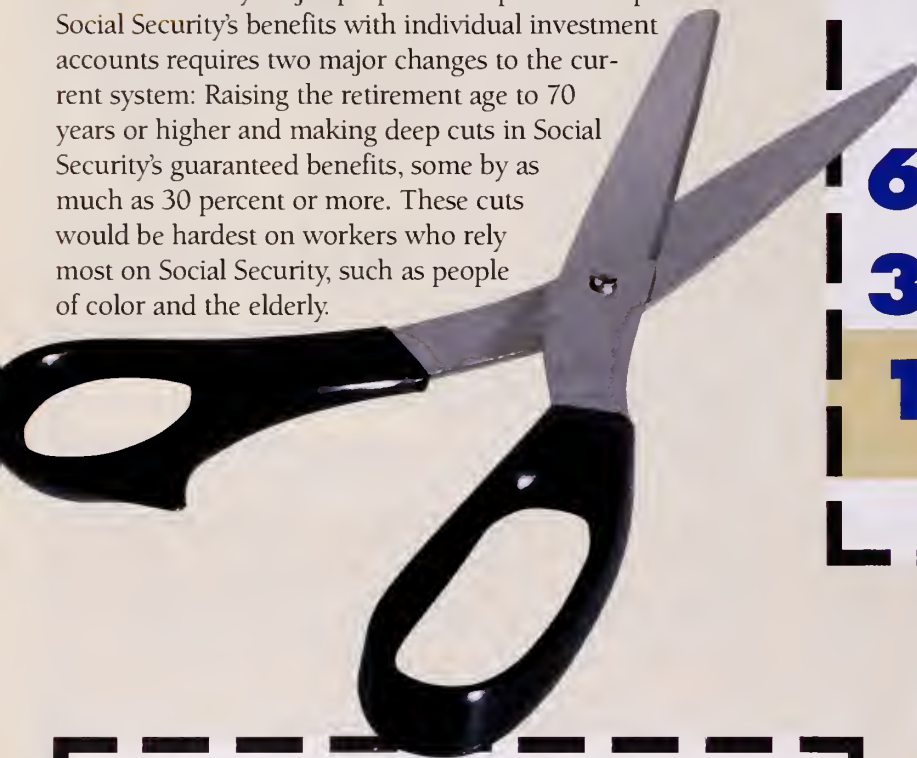
Not so fast: Children of immigrants denied the right to work in the United States take part in a symbolic Thanksgiving "fast" to bring attention to the plight of their parents who had worked in this country legally for years before a change in immigration law.

WHO NEEDS IT?

SOCIAL SECURITY:

Social Security protects families in the event that a worker retires, becomes disabled or dies.

Every major proposal to replace all or part of Social Security's benefits with individual investment accounts requires two major changes to the current system: Raising the retirement age to 70 years or higher and making deep cuts in Social Security's guaranteed benefits, some by as much as 30 percent or more. These cuts would be hardest on workers who rely most on Social Security, such as people of color and the elderly.



TWO OUT OF THREE ELDERLY AMERICANS

Rely on Social Security for Most of Their Income

66% of elderly Americans rely on Social Security for half or more of their income. Of these...

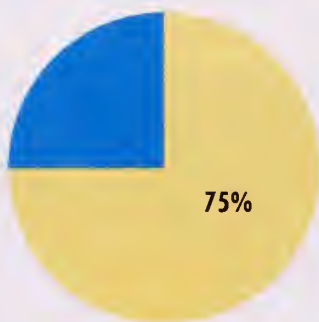
30% rely on Social Security for 90 percent of their income

18% rely on Social Security for all of their income

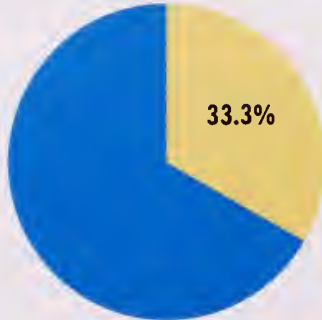
Source: Social Security Administration

Social Security Benefits Are Especially Crucial for **AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LATINO HOUSEHOLDS**

Percentage of older African American and Latino households that rely on Social Security for half of their retirement income.



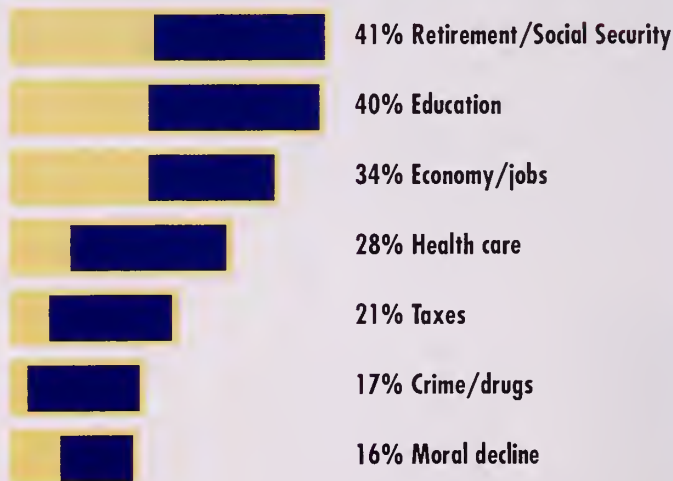
Percentage of African American and Latino households that rely on Social Security for all of their retirement income.



Source: Social Security Administration, Office of Research, Evaluation and Statistics, *Income of the Population 55 or Older*, 1996, April 1998.

Social Security: A Critical Issue in Elections for **UNION MEMBERS**

■ Most important issue ■ Second most important issue



Issues mattered most to 67 percent of union members polled in a post-election survey, and 41 percent put retirement and Social Security at the top of their list.

Source: Peter D. Hart Research for AFL-CIO

www.aflcio.org/socialsecurity

A new AFL-CIO website provides information on how Social Security works, why it is so vital to America's working families, who is behind schemes to privatize it—and union action steps for strengthening Social Security. Send e-mails directly from the site to your congressional representatives, and submit testimonials about the role of Social Security in your life.

ON TELEVISION

Livelyhood

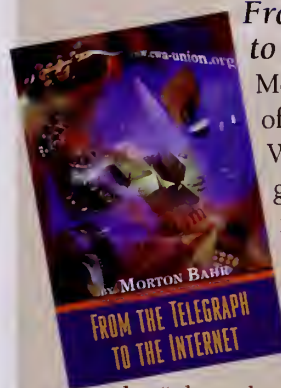
Tune in to "Our Towns": The PBS series *Livelyhood* kicks off its second season Jan. 26 with "Our Towns," stories about working people building healthy places to live. One segment, narrated by humorist Will Durst, will highlight the recent living wage victory in San Jose, Calif., where the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council pulled together a community coalition of religious, business and community allies to win the nation's highest living wages for employees of city contractors (see story, page 5). Broadcasts are scheduled for the last week of January through Feb. 9. Check your local listings for time and date. Special tool kits are available on the Internet at www.pbs.org/livelyhood or by calling the show's producers, the Working Group, at 510-268-9675. ☐

On the Web

www.unions.org—If you need to find a local union's website, chances are you can find a link to it here amid hundreds of links organized by state.

www.icemna.org—The North American regional office of the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers (ICEM) opened a new website that focuses on campaigns by the organization and its affiliates, which include 15 AFL-CIO unions. The site also provides news, information and research links, audio clips from speeches, photographs from demonstrations, separate pages for each industrial section and corporate research links for those seeking company-specific information. Also included is a section of general labor research links for

In Print



From the Telegraph to the Internet, by Morton Bahr, president of the Communications Workers, charts CWA's growth through its focus on organizing and the union's foresight in adapting to new technologies.

Bahr believes that the "glory days" of his union are "today" and explains how organizing and meeting the challenges of changing technology will be the survival tools for unions in the 21st century. He cites the advice former AFL-CIO President George Meany gave to smaller unions ("look for a merger partner") as the guide for consolidating labor's strength to match those of corporate giants. Bahr's historical perspective on the union is interspersed with recollections of others who have influenced his life, especially former CWA President Joe Beirne. The 324-page book, with a foreword by Sen. Edward Kennedy, covers the gamut of union responsibilities, including organizing, collective bargaining, political action and community service. And Bahr explains how unions adapted to the "new workforce" of the 1980s and 1990s as the American economy shifted from manufacturing and service to information. \$24.95. National Press Books, Inc., 1925 K St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

The Lexicon of Labor, by R. Emmett Murray, features more than 500 key union terms, biographical sketches and historical perspectives. Murray presents the origins of the terminology and the

union activity throughout the United States and Canada.

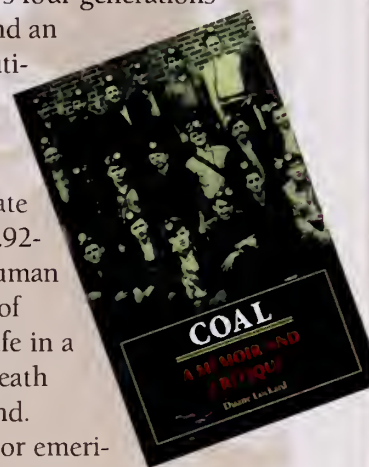
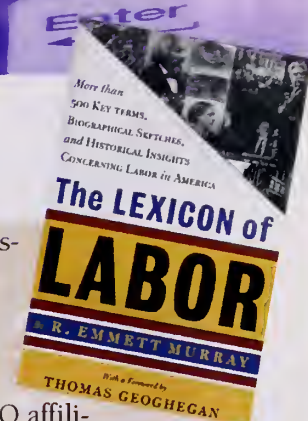
www.labourstart.org—The independent website LabourStart, by Labour and Society International, is edited by author Eric Lee (*The Labour Movement and the Internet*) and updated daily. Featuring labor news and numerous links to trade union websites around the world, it also

background behind passage of key labor laws and the decisions of famous union court cases. The 207-page book also lists AFL-CIO affiliates, provides a select labor bibliography and features a "Free Rider's Card," author unknown, that says the "free rider" forgoes any wage and benefit improvements won by the union. A good gift for news reporters and local libraries. \$13.95. Available in bookstores or through W. W. Norton & Co., 800-233-4830.

Coal: A Memoir and Critique, by Duane Lockard, is both a personal recollection of his family's four generations in the coal mines and an overview of the political and social critique of coal companies as poor examples of corporate citizens. Lockard's 292-page book puts a human face on the victims of coal mining, from life in a company town to death 800 feet underground. Lockard is a professor emeritus of politics at Princeton University and author of numerous books. \$29.95. University Press of Virginia.

The Living Wage: Building a Fair Economy, by economists Robert Pollin and Stephanie Luce, illustrates the economic case for living wage laws. The first living wage law was passed in Baltimore in 1994 over strenuous objections and dire predictions by employers. This 262-page book explains the benefits for both low-wage workers and the community. \$22.50, hardcover. The New Press. ☐

includes an online forum for those who write, edit and design trade union websites; a discussion forum for all unionists; a directory of union websites; a directory of online labor conferences and community forums; and Labor's Online Bookstore. There is also a Labour Channel that utilizes "push" technology to automatically bring subscribers the labor union information they want. ☐



ORGANIZING VICTORIES

Unions made organizing a top priority in 1998, signing up more than 200,000 workers across the country. Here is a small sample of our success.

Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

FEBRUARY 1999

America @work

ALSO INSIDE:

***Organizing in
Puerto Rico***

***Stop
Scapegoating
Working
Moms***

Dirty Business

**Holding corporations accountable
for supporting Burma's brutal regime**

VOICES

IDEAS AND VIEWS FROM YOU

Say What?

What health and safety actions is your union planning for Workers Memorial Day?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Responses will appear in a future issue.

America@work
815 16th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
Phone: 202-637-5010
Fax: 202-508-6908
e-mail: atwork@aflcio.org

Here's What You Say

ABOUT HOLDING LAWMAKERS ELECTED NOV. 3 ACCOUNTABLE TO WORKING FAMILIES:

"In South Florida, we are using the small network that we started with just prior to the election....Congressman Mark Foley (R) has been going around for months saying the response he was getting from his district was 70-to-1 for impeachment. The CLC affiliates and building trades got the message out to the unions, and...an article in the *Palm Beach Post* reported that Foley's office had been inundated with thousands of calls and 3,500 e-mail messages...from labor union members....Here in Palm Beach County, with only one day's notice, we had 200 people walking our picket [at his offices]....We were on the six and 11 o'clock newscasts.

"We're working our way to the Year 2000 elections and...really want to expand on what we are doing..."—Pat Emmert, Palm Beach-Treasure Coast (Fla.) AFL-CIO

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in **America@work**.

When you see
unions@work
and our
members@work
and collective power
in our
communities@work,
that's when you see

America@work

The following four letters were drawn from 14 letters sent by students enrolled in Introduction to Industrial and Labor Relations at State University of New York/College at Old Westbury:

"I MUST COMMEND YOU ON THE THREE-PART article on Social Security. The article is very informative on the issues that surround Social Security and what is being done, whether it's privatization or complete reform. Without a doubt, the Social Security system should not be privatized. Privatizing Social Security is a gamble whereby there are a lot of risks and uncertainty involved."
—Kwesi Edwards

"I AM A UNION MEMBER [AND] I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT unity is in the workplace. A brief, to-the-point article in [America@work] has made me realize the importance of unity nationwide. Steel producers outside the United States that lowball our producers are a serious problem for our union brothers and sisters. I hope the article inspired others to call or write their elected governmental officials....Thumbs up, USWA, on the Stand Up for Steel campaign."—Frank Germinaro, AFSCME/CSEA Local 882, N.Y.

[REGARDING "THE MARCH TO CONQUER CANCER," OCT. 1998]
"I was happy to know that a union's job is not only fighting to improve the lives of working families but also fighting the cause against breast cancer. Educating your members of this terrible disease will indeed save many lives."—Ann Pariag

"I...WAS ESPECIALLY PLEASED WITH THE ARTICLE titled 'Union Teen'....I'm willing to bet every day across America there is a young union employee being taken advantage of....Programs such as...the King County Labor Council based in Seattle will prove to be extremely useful in teaching the future working-class citizens of America...."—Michael Dumelle

Clarification:

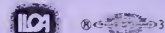
The November/December America@work reported that Chiquita owns a banana plantation in Guatemala where workers seek to form a union. The plantation produces bananas for Chiquita, but Chiquita does not own the plantation.

America@work

February 1999 • Vol. 4, No. 2

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Internet: http://www.aflcia.org



America@work (ISSN 1091594X) is designed to inspire and support frontline union leaders and activists with tips, tools and news you can use in the fight to build a strong voice for America's working families. It is the official publication of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and is issued 11 times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to America@work, 815 16th St., N.W., Room 209, Washington, D.C. 20006

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4 CURRENTS

Following Martin Luther King's footsteps in Birmingham

USWA members "Stand Up for Steel"

Montana activists turn on the Street Heat

21 OUT THERE

Busting the union busters

Kids rally against Guess?

22 SHOPTALK

Turning out a crowd

23 HOMEPAGE

1999 convention calendar

A political portrait of Paul Robeson at the American Labor Museum

12



8

THE STATE OF AMERICA'S WORKERS

The American economy is soaring and productivity is growing, so why are workers still struggling?

9

WORKING FOR AMERICA

A question-and-answer session with Working for America Institute Director Bruce Herman

10

STOP SCAPEGOATING WORKING MOMS

As unions press for family-friendly policies, some are finding that employers are joining in the chorus that's scapegoating working mothers

12

WOMEN OF HOPE

A Bread and Roses 1199/SEIU Cultural Project poster series portrays images of strong and courageous women inspired to fight against injustice

14

ORGANIZING IN PUERTO RICO

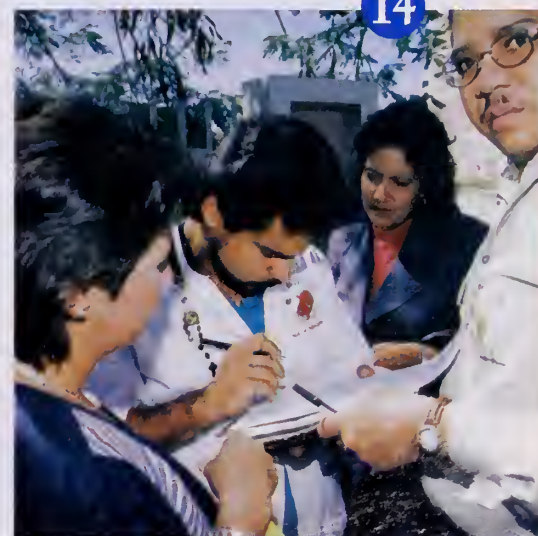
The island's 150,000 public employees marked Jan. 1 as the first day they could join together in unions and bargain collectively

18

DIRTY BUSINESS

Holding corporations accountable for supporting Burma's brutal regime

14





Steeled for action: Thousands of steelworkers rallied at the U.S. Capitol Jan. 20 to urge Congress to stem the flood of steel imports. Steelworkers President George Becker and Weirton Steel CEO Richard Rierder joined Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Rep. Ralph Regula (R-Ohio), chairmen of the Senate and Congressional Steel Caucuses, respectively, to call for a U.S. policy to stem cheap steel imports and save American jobs. After the "Stand Up for Steel" rally, the workers marched down Pennsylvania Avenue to deliver their message to the White House.

TWU Wings Its Way to Victory

and it finally paid off," says Rezler, an active member-organizer. On Jan. 8, nearly 2,000 fleet service workers at America West joined up with TWU.

Organizing the 18- to 25-year-old cargo workers, most of whom work part time at the Tempe, Ariz.-based airline, presented some unique challenges, says organizer Frank Trotti, who spearheaded the campaign.

To reach and mobilize the workers for a union election, TWU set up a local union office in Tempe which "made them feel like they were part of something," Trotti says. Another key to success: "We tried to keep it fun." The union produced newsletters for the employees in a conversational and humorous tone. When the company began attacking union salaries, TWU fought back with a newsletter graphic that depicted a man pushing a wheelbarrow full of cash to illustrate the multimillion-dollar compensation of the America West CEO. @

After an organizing drive at America West Airlines failed last year, the company promised to listen to workers' complaints about low pay, no job security and no voice on the job. But baggage handler Pat Rezler said that didn't happen. So when the Transport Workers renewed the campaign recently, employees at the airline "saw that we were telling the truth,



Creating jobs: Building trades councils won 20 project labor agreements in 1998, creating tens of thousands of high-skill jobs.

Building Trades Score 20 Project Labor Agreements

Employers have long found that project labor agreements (PLAs) assure them of skilled union workers and quality construction. Last year, building trades councils won more than 20 PLAs covering more than \$1 billion in work—creating tens of thousands of high-skill jobs and boosting the economies of at least 14 states, according to the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Dept.

The projects vary widely in scope and location and include a \$100 million-plus highway and casino construction project

in California, a \$160 million land-level transfer facility for Maine's Bath Iron Works, a soybean processing plant in Indiana, a hydroelectric generating facility in West Virginia and an Air National Guard facility in Illinois. Negotiations are pending on 20 more PLAs.

"This was a very prolific year for project labor agreements," says BCTD President Robert Georgine. "More and more decision makers in both the public and private sectors are appreciating the value, stability and fairness that PLAs bring to the construction industry." @



In King's footsteps: UNITE Vice President Clayola Brown (center) and fellow trade unionists help clean out a warehouse for Habitat for Humanity in Birmingham, Ala., one of several community service actions that were part of the AFL-CIO Martin Luther King birthday celebration. About 600 union members honored King's memory with a four-day series of events that included rallies, community service and workshops. Full coverage of the celebration will appear in the March *America@work*.

BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

SAG Notes New Levels for Latino Employment

The Screen Actors' efforts to ensure that films and television reflect the nation's diversity are paying off. According to a recent report by SAG, 1997 marked the best year ever for Latino employment levels in the industry. After six years of steady gains, it was the first time Latinos cracked the 4 percent employment barrier. Latinos were cast in 2,241 acting roles, another record.

"It is encouraging that the number is going up," says SAG spokesman Rafe Greenlee. However, "It is discouraging that Latinos are still significantly underrepresented," he says, noting that the group makes up 11 percent of the U.S. population.

SAG, which collects figures on minorities on TV and films annually, is active in helping diversify the big and small screens. It publishes a casting directory that includes African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Pacific Islanders and Latinos—and recently added a section on African American stunt performers. "The idea is to get those pictures and resumes into the hands of casting directors," says Greenlee.

SAG also bestows its annual "American Scene" award to directors and productions that best showcase the talents of actors of all races and ethnicities. ☐

APWU Delivers First Private-Sector Win

When the U.S. Postal Service started shifting jobs to the private sector, the Postal Workers set up a private-sector organizing fund and vowed to organize the workers. On Jan. 14, the APWU tallied its first win, with drivers who transport U.S. mail at East Coast Leasing in Greensboro, N.C., voting 67-40 for the union.

"Lots of people thought we couldn't do it, but a breakthrough has really been made here," says Wray Davis, president of APWU Local 711, which ran the organizing drive—one of three ongoing organizing efforts by the local.

The in-plant organizing committee made the difference, says Local 711 lead organizer Mark Dimondstein. The seven-month campaign involved phone calling, letter-writing, gaining community support and meeting drivers at layover stops often hundreds of miles from Greensboro, Dimondstein says, adding, "We hope this is just a beginning." ☐

The Future of Labor

Union efforts to bring more young people into the labor movement are bearing fruit at Cornell University, which revived a course on contract administration after students petitioned the dean's office. The contract course, which hasn't been taught for 15 years, teaches students how to manage a collective bargaining agreement.

"It reflects a growing interest in the labor movement because of the organizing efforts by the AFL-CIO—and the press coverage labor is getting—as well as the have/have-not structure of the economy," says Edward Lawler, dean of the School of Labor and Industrial Relations. "We still have idealistic young people who want to solve problems in society." ☐

Union Cities: Heralding the success of Union Cities at an AFL-CIO press briefing, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka joined Bridgette Williams, president of the Kansas City (Mo.) Central Labor Council, saying that when it comes to giving workers



RAFAEL CRISOSTOMO/EL PRECONCERNERO

a voice, "We realized we couldn't do it from the top down. It had to be member-driven." Some 156 AFL-CIO central labor councils, working together with national unions, are taking part in the Union Cities initiative, including Atlanta, where the labor council worked with AirTron's flight attendants in their successful fight for a first contract.

SPOTLIGHT

Montana Activists Turn On the Street Heat

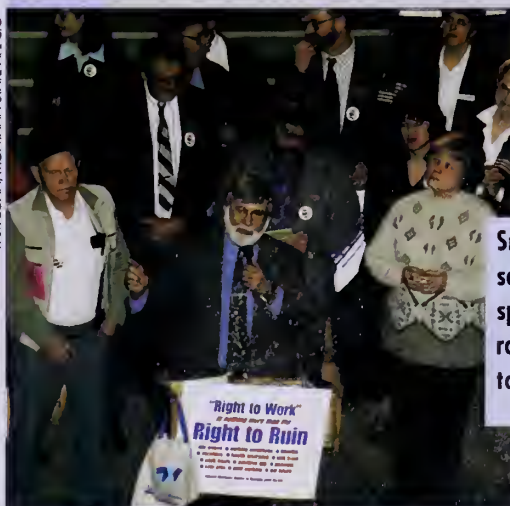
When 350 Montana union activists—some traveling as far as 200 miles in the bitter January cold—packed the Statehouse in Helena, the workers succeeded in beating back a proposed "right-to-work" law that legislators were considering at a committee hearing. The Business and Labor Committee, dominated by anti-worker politicians, voted to table the legislation by a 14-to-4 vote after hearing testimony from union leaders and their allies in the religious, farming and women's communities. State and local elected officials joined them in a victory rally after the vote.

"It's nice to have a victory early in the session," says Don Judge, executive secretary of the Montana state federation, which coordinated the mobilization effort. Union members were mobilized on a week's notice—a rapid response that Judge says was possible with an automated dialing machine, enabling union activists to place phone calls to thousands of union households. "People respond to it well," he says.

The state federation will put its mobilization strategies to use again later this year if an anticipated attempt to enact "paycheck deception" legislation materializes. "If they

engage us in that," Judge says, "we'll show them how mobilized labor can get." ☐

PAM EGAN/MONTANA STATE AFL-CIO



Snow time: Don Judge, executive secretary of the Montana AFL-CIO, speaks to 350 union members who rallied to defeat a proposed "right-to-work" law in Montana.

SEIU Launches Needlestick Campaign

Peggy Ferro, a registered nurse at San Francisco General Hospital and an SEIU Local 790 member, suffered a needlestick injury in 1988. In November, the 49-year-old former nurse died of AIDS she contracted from that injury—a death that could have been prevented.

This year, SEIU is launching a major campaign to stop needlestick injuries, an easily avoidable workplace hazard that leaves 1,000 workers a year infected with diseases such as hepatitis B and C and HIV and kills 100 health care professionals annually.

Syringes with protective shields or mechanisms that automatically retract the needle

into the barrel have been available for years. Following a union-led campaign last year, the California legislature passed, and former Gov. Pete Wilson signed, a law that requires hospitals and other health care facilities to use these safety needlesticks.

The union plans to introduce needlestick safety legislation patterned on the California law in 20 other states this year, while stepping up its demand that the federal government and OSHA make reduction of needlestick injuries a priority. Local unions that represent health care workers also can negotiate safe needlestick language, as have several SEIU locals. A video on needlestick safety—dedicated to Ferro—is available through SEIU. Call 202-898-3416. ☐

CWA honored for job training: CWA President Morton Bahr received the Department of Labor's top award for improving employment opportunities for veterans in recognition of a job referral program CWA developed with the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service. The Internet-based job tracking and skills assessment program has been available on 260 military bases for five months. "CWA, under President Bahr's leadership, is on the cutting edge of preparing America's workers for the changing workplace of the 21st century," said Labor Secretary Alexis Herman.



DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

NLRB: WORKERS CAN REFUSE STRIKEBREAKER TRAINING

When a strike seemed imminent at the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Hollinger International newspapers in Benton, Mich., wanted to train computer specialist Doug Biermann in a program that would allow him to fill in as a strikebreaker. Biermann refused—and changed labor law in the process.

The company fired Biermann. Union leaders at the Chicago Newspaper Guild heard about the firing and took the case to the National Labor Relations Board which, in a precedent-setting ruling, found that refusing to train to be a strikebreaker is a protected activity similar to refusing to cross a picket line. The NLRB ordered the company to offer Biermann his job back and compensate him for the two weeks he was unemployed. "Finding personal success by climbing on other people's backs wasn't the answer," he says.

Ken Edwards, general counsel for the Guild local, says the case benefits all unions. "Now, if we are preparing for a strike, we can tell employees that they can say, 'No' to training for crossing a picket line." (As it turned out, the 1997 strike at the *Sun-Times* never materialized.) Biermann, who works in a nonunion shop, says the experience taught him that "unions really stick up for their members." ☐

Union airwaves: President Bill Clinton, shown here with UAW President Steve Yokich, taped a January segment of his weekly radio address from the UAW Solidarity House in Detroit. With the backdrop of the union hall, Clinton announced a proposal for aid to the International Labor Organization to help provide basic labor protections, safe workplaces and the right of workers to organize to "improve their lives through unions, just as generations of Americans have done through the UAW."



WILLIAM JORDAN

Public Needs, Not Private Profit

Wisconsin's welfare-to-work reform is often touted as a model for the nation, but a recent report by AFSCME says the system is generating profits for the private companies running the programs by shortchanging the clients they serve.

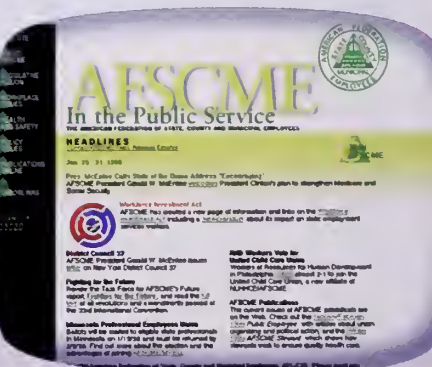
Private Profit, Public Needs: The Administration of W-2 in Milwaukee, found that the five

private agencies running the welfare-to-work program there (where 85 percent of the state's welfare recipients live) generated a surplus during the first 11 months of operation, leading to profits of \$12.4 million. If the county were running the program, that \$12.4 million would be available to fund more services for the needy, AFSCME says. (In other Wisconsin coun-

ties where the programs are run by public agencies, surplus funds are reinvested in the community.)

"The state and county must reevaluate the perverse incentives in the current system of allowing private agencies to profit at the expense of clients and the community," the report says.

For a copy of the report, call



the AFSCME Public Affairs Dept., 202-429-1130, or visit the website, www.afscme.org. Click on "policy issues," then "welfare reform." ☐



to reservations: Flight Attendants President Pat Friend announced the union is pulling its 1999 convention out of Cincinnati to protest a discriminatory new law.

INTOLERANCE Doesn't Pay

In Cincinnati, a charter amendment blocking extension of work and housing antidiscrimination rules to all citizens, regardless of sexual orientation, became law last October—the only such municipal restriction in the nation.

And that prompted the Flight Attendants to scrap plans to meet there later this year.

"We cannot in good conscience hold our annual meeting in a city that denies protections we all should enjoy to those who are lesbian, gay or bisexual," AFA President Patricia Friend says.

Issue 3, passed in 1993 and followed by five years of legal challenges up to the Supreme Court level, already has cost city businesses an estimated \$35 million. AFA's 1997 meeting in Portland, Ore., brought more than \$135,000 into that community, according to the union.

"Instead of Cincinnati, we are moving our 1999 meeting to a community that actively supports and promotes human rights and equal protection for all," Friend wrote in a letter to the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. "It is our hope that the citizens of Cincinnati will fight this terrible injustice and repeal Issue 3." ☐

Public Gives Traffic Controllers Flying Colors

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association works hard to monitor safety shortcomings and the high-stress work environment in the nation's air traffic system. NATCA's emphasis on safety has not gone unnoticed: A survey of 900 people, commissioned by NATCA, found that 80 percent believe controllers do a good or excellent job, and 85 percent of

respondents recognize that the controllers' work is more stressful than other occupations. A full 81 percent say they would be willing to pay an extra dollar per airline ticket if the money supported equipment upgrades.

NATCA President Mike McNally says, "It's no secret controllers put safety first—well above a penny-wise, pound-foolish mentality." ☐

OUT FRONT

On the playground, one child has all the toys—all the balls, shovels, pails and even a fancy red wagon to pull them all around in. The other kids can only sit and watch. Any four-year-old there can sum up the situation very articulately: It's not fair.

But it's a good lesson in life and the ugly realities of economic injustice.

Here in America, the wealthiest 10 percent of people control 70 percent of all our wealth. Worldwide, the richest three people have assets that exceed the combined gross domestic product of the 48 least developed countries, according to the U.N.'s *Human Development Report 1998*. The world's richest 225—the biggest share of whom live here in the United States—have wealth equaling the annual income of the poorest 47 percent of the world's people (2.5 billion souls). Less than 4 percent of the wealth of these 225 fortunates could provide basic education and health care, women's reproductive health services and adequate food, safe water and nutrition for everyone in need on the planet.

The U.N. report tells us a lot about society's priorities. Basic education around the world would cost \$6 billion a year—\$2 billion less than we in the United States spend on cosmetics. Basic health and nutrition would cost \$13 billion a year—\$4 billion less than Americans and Europeans spend on pet food.

The concentration of wealth among the wealthy gets more extreme each year. America has five times more billionaires now than it had in 1989, says the Children's Defense Fund, but 4 million more poor children. And, as the story on page 8 shows, we have to work harder and longer to keep from falling further behind.

The gross economic disparities behind these numbers sicken me, as I'm sure they do you. But they're a great incentive to keep getting up in the morning and taking on the fights we know we must win.

Today's unions and our allies are the only ones struggling to bring economic justice to our country and to our world. And we are making a difference. At the bargaining table, we raise workers' wages, improve benefits and give them a better chance at their fair share of prosperity within their companies and within their countries. In communities, we boost living standards and improve the quality of goods and services available to working families. And on the political and legislative fronts, we ensure that all working families have a voice.

Today's unions are the best hope in the world for providing the children on that playground with a future ripe with economic fairness. ☐

...And Justice for Some



REUBEN DOSS

BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

Miner assistance: Demonstrating the power of joint Street Heat mobilization, some six dozen volunteers from Arizona unions and religious and community groups unload five truckloads of food, blankets and clothes for copper miners and their families in Cananea, Mexico.



The workers, who earn between \$8 and \$12 a day, went on strike in November after the mine's owner, Grupo México, demanded wage reductions, elimination of health care benefits and outsourcing of bargaining unit work. The vast majority of workers in this remote town of 33,000 residents, located about 40 miles south of the U.S. border, depend on the mine for jobs.

VICENTE BRACHO/AGUIJA EL IMPARCIAL

THE STATE OF America's Workers

Even though the American economy is soaring, with productivity growing and wages up slightly in comparison with recent years, the income for most workers is no better today than it was in the 1980s—and for many groups, including recent college graduates and some white-collar workers, it has gotten worse, according to 1997 data in *The State of Working America*, published biennially by the Economic Policy Institute.

At the same time, jobs have become less secure and are less likely to offer health and pension benefits.

Working families that have been able to maintain or improve their standard of living have done so mainly by increasing the number of hours worked by one spouse—or more likely both.

But the picture is a lot brighter if you are in the top 1 percent of household incomes or the CEO of a company: Both groups have seen their wealth skyrocket.

These are the economic realities working families face at the dawn of 1999, according to economists Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein and John Schmitt, who report that for many, the economic boom has been a bust. “Most working families are still playing catch-up,” Bernstein says.

Here are some hard facts about the state of America's workers:

- The median wage adjusted for inflation in 1997 was 3.1 percent lower than in 1989. Over the same period, real wages for the bottom 60 percent of workers actually declined.
- Working families gained primarily when women became the second worker in the family. The study found that the typical married-couple family had to work 247 more hours—more than six weeks—in 1996 than in 1989 to make ends meet.
- CEO pay is skyrocketing, more than doubling between 1989 and 1997, rising to 116 times the pay of an average worker in 1997.
- Wages for the bottom 80 percent of men were lower in 1997 than in 1989, with the average male worker's real earnings down 6.7 percent.
- Families that earn between \$36,000 and \$53,600 a year saw the value of their wealth decline between 1989 and 1997 (adjusted for inflation) due to a rise in indebtedness. Between 1989 and 1995, the share of households with zero or negative wealth increased from 15.5 percent to 18.5 percent of all households. By 1995, almost one-third of African American households had zero or negative wealth.

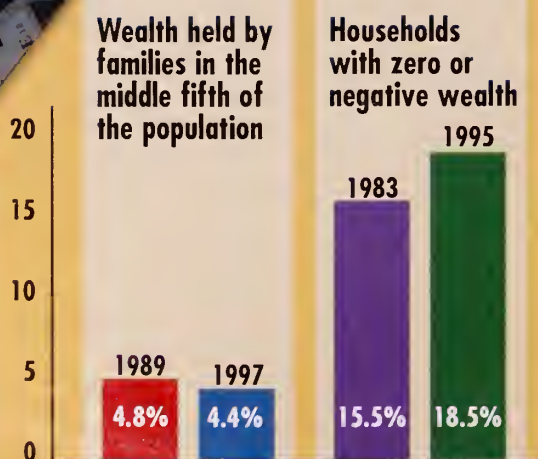
Families Have Worked More Hours...

	1989	1996	CHANGE	% CHANGE
Income	\$53,908	\$54,515	\$607	1.1
Annual hours (husbands and wives)	3,549	3,685	136	3.8
Husbands	2,207	2,227	20	0.9
Wives	1,342	1,458	116	8.6

Percent change in income without wives' added hours: -1.7%

Data include prime-age (25-54) couples only, to avoid the impact of retirement on average hours worked.

...Just to Tread Water



• In 1997, the last year for which data are available, the share of the wealth held by the top 1 percent of households grew from 37.4 percent to 39.1 percent. At the same time, the annual tax bill for the top 1 percent has dropped \$36,710 in the past 20 years as a result of changes in the tax laws.

All in all, the authors say, the evidence is overwhelming that the “new economy” of the past decade has not been a “better economy,” nor has the large-scale redistribution of wealth and income to the rich brought about prosperity for the majority of Americans.

As the authors note, we must “recognize and address the scope of wage and income problems that over the past two decades have diminished the quality of life of American families.”

Copies of *The State of Working America 1998-99* are available from the Economic Policy Institute publications section, 1660 L Street, N.W., Suite 1200, Washington, D.C. 20036; 800-374-4844. The cost is \$24.95 plus shipping. Or visit the website: www.epinet.org.

The AFL-CIO Working For America Institute was formed in October 1998, replacing the Human Resources Development Institute. WFA's director is Bruce Herman who, as head of the Garment Industry Development Corp. in New York City, helped pioneer efforts to work with the industry in joint efforts.

Q: What are the goals of the Working For America Institute?

A: Instead of "training workers for the new jobs that are being created," we want to help unions and industries join together to create new jobs and educate and train the workers for those jobs. We want to get labor involved in creating jobs so we can add our values and set certain standards like good-paying and safe jobs.

We want to create high-road negotiated partnerships with industry. First, we're going to look at union-led grassroots economic development projects and get a handle on their common elements and structure. We want to nurture existing programs and seed and create new ones through technical assistance.

Q: What does this new focus mean for activists in local unions?

A: They'll be able to ask us for assistance in areas that we couldn't offer previously, such as putting together models of successful labor-led economic development programs and helping union leaders understand the new Workforce Investment Act. We also will continue the traditional employment training programs that HRDI was known for—but with a twist. Workers will be able to pick up credit toward a degree from the National Labor College at the Meany Center when they take employment training courses.

Q: What is your first initiative?

A: Our initial challenge is to help affiliates, state federations and central labor councils get up to speed on the changes in the Workforce Investment Act, the new legislation that restructures the entire federal program for employee training. There are changes in the system, and we need to understand how we can empower our congressional representatives to be more effective. States will now have a lot more power in determining how the money is spent. Congress has said the Workforce Investment Boards, which replace the former Private Industry Councils, must be employer dominated. So we need to figure out how to be more effective with what we have.

Q: How will the institute work with communities?

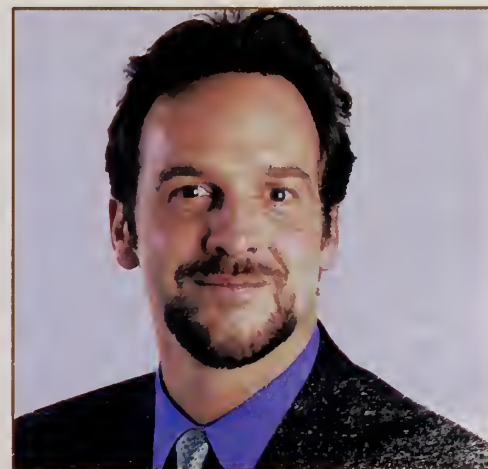
A: We need to create development partnerships to get a handle on the economic conditions in an area and what workers in the community need. Working with workers and community groups, we can determine where there's job growth, where there are problems with competitiveness, where members are at risk and what industries or communities are at risk.

I think it's important that we develop more ongoing alliances with our natural allies, people who live where we live.

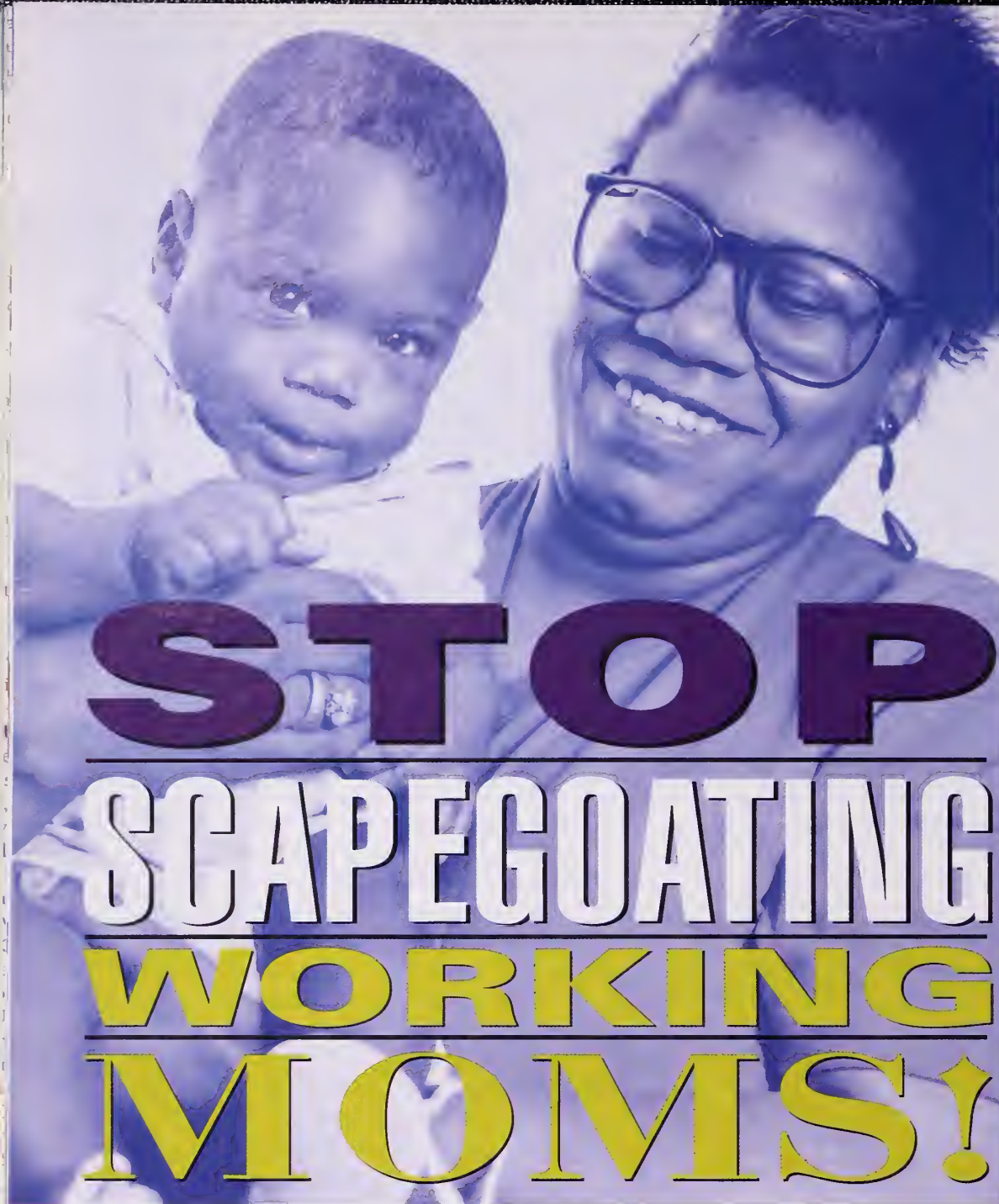
Q: Completing economic audits and focusing resources on communities will require a great deal of coordination and liaison with other unions and community groups. How will you reach out to them and ensure their participation?

A: You don't build alliances in the abstract. You do it by bringing together concrete programs. Where there are problems with a lack of skilled workers, there is a natural opportunity to bring people together and figure out how to create good jobs. Or when there is dislocation, you have the chance to help members get education and training to take advantage of new opportunities. ☐

WORKING FOR AMERICA INSTITUTE:



A QUESTION-AND-ANSWER
SESSION WITH DIRECTOR BRUCE HERMAN



STOP SCAPEGOATING WORKING MOMS!

BY BETTY HOLCOMB

IT'S OPEN SEASON ON WORKING MOMS AGAIN.

You name it, and they are blamed for it: divorce, youth crime, teen drug abuse and drinking. Even childhood obesity has been laid at the feet of mothers who work. The charges are leveled on talk radio, in news reports, books and even in congressional debates. Not so long ago, for example, former Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.) insisted that American society has been "devastated" by working mothers who "put careers ahead of children."

To listen to the critics, one could conclude that mothers who work are either too exhausted to properly care for their kids or selfish "careerists" willing to sacrifice their children's well-being for their own materialistic needs. Just last summer, for example, a reader of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

accused working moms of "farming" their kids out to have a "huge house, a boat and hundreds of thousands in income."

Most moms are far too busy earning a living and taking care of their kids to think about who creates and markets these messages. Yet every day—whether in casual

conversation or through the media, they hear they are doing something wrong.

"Too bad you have to work," someone might say. Or, "Isn't it a long day for your child in day care?" Even if their friends and family are supportive, the message comes through loud and clear in work policies and school schedules.

The typical workplace is still set up to serve breadwinner dad and homemaker mom. Flexible work practices become "favors" and "accommodations" rather than necessary innovations to meet the needs of today's working parents.

Instead of discussions about making workplaces work for working mothers, we repeatedly read stories about how upper-income women—those earning six-figure salaries—are returning home in droves. The *Wall Street Journal* has gone so far as to declare stay-at-home mothering the "status symbol" of our time.

The truth is, women work for the very same reasons that men do—because they have to and because they want to. More than 25 million women with children work outside the home, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which also reports that women now bring in nearly half the family income in most dual-earner households. One out of five earns more than her husband.

And millions of single moms support their kids alone. They are breadwinners who take pride in providing for their families. But only a handful make six figures: Most are lucky to break the \$25,000-a-year mark.

More important: For many families, a mother's job puts food on the table and a roof over everyone's heads—keeping the family out of poverty. In many cases, a working mother means having health insurance and a chance for a college education.

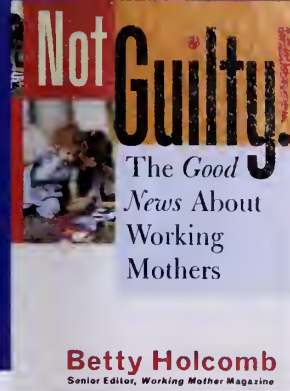
It's likely that if most men were asked—as women so often are—if they wanted to quit working, they'd say yes. But women, like men, need the paycheck and also find satisfaction and pride in using their skills and supporting themselves and their families. According to a survey by the AFL-CIO Working Women's Department, four out of five women say they like or love their jobs.

Scapegoating has consequences

Given these realities, it would be nice to dismiss the ongoing attacks on working

As unions press for more family-friendly policies, some are finding that the issue of working mothers can result in resistance from employers.

Betty Holcomb, a working mother and author of the recently published book *Not Guilty! The Good News About Working Mothers* (Scribner), discusses the sources—and the outcome—of scapegoating working mothers.



mothers as a harmless nostalgia for a simpler life. But taken together, these wrong-headed assumptions form the backbone of a powerful bias that assaults women's psyches, lowers their paychecks and undermines support for child care.

For example, the notion that women should not and do not want to work once they have babies feeds the stereotype that women aren't committed to their jobs—and thus aren't worth promoting, mentoring or even keeping on the payroll once they give birth. And that leads to job discrimination. Many employers still believe women will quit their jobs when they start a family. The net result is that far too many women lose out on raises, promotions and plum assignments. Pregnancy and maternity-related issues are still the most common reasons that women call job-problem hotlines.

Worse, the bias persists despite the evidence: Between 80 and 90 percent of all women now return to their jobs after a baby is born, according to Catalyst, a non-profit think tank that documents women's progress on the job. In some workplaces, those figures are even higher. The Bank of Montreal, for example, reports 98 percent of all women return after maternity leave. Women there also had better performance reviews and longer tenure, on average, than men.

This is not to argue that life is always better when mom works or that all kids thrive in child care. Working mothers and fathers face difficult choices about how to juggle work and family. Nine million kids aged six or younger have working parents, and many families depend on severely underpaid child care workers—98 percent of them women—to take care of them.

But flexible work options that would assist with child care are rarely part of company policy. Instead, employees' pay is docked if they take off for a sick child. Parents seeking a few months' leave to care for their newborns have the Family and Medical Leave Act, which goes a long way

toward giving new parents time at home, but FMLA is unpaid and available only for full-time employees in workplaces with 50 or more employees. Without a paycheck, women rush back to the job before they are ready.

Increasingly, employers are asking workers to make impossible choices between their children and their jobs. Many companies have created round-the-clock workplaces, rotating employees in and out of shifts on short notice and into time slots when child care is unavailable. Sometimes parents must choose between leaving a child untended and keeping their jobs. Forced overtime is also growing more common. A recent survey by the Families and Work Institute shows that work is three times more likely to disrupt family life than the other way around.

Workplace-based solutions

What women and their families need are real solutions. Paid leave to care for their newborn babies. Better child care. Flexible work arrangements to tend to family needs, such as a sick child or elderly parent. And better pay and benefits. Some unions are winning contracts that provide these solutions. The Communications Workers, for example, have created a mul-

timillion dollar child care fund for their members at AT&T. Such innovations prove profitable both for the company and the workers—AT&T is now an employer of choice, able to recruit the best workers in a tight labor market. Turnover costs also have gone down. Yet overall, progressive solutions are held hostage to the continuing, bitter debate over whether women should work. Last year, child care bills were killed in Congress by social conservatives intent on returning women home.

It's time to change this conversation and stop scapegoating working women. If anyone should be on the hot seat, it's employers and policymakers who have the power to create the policies that could provide real support for working families. Working moms are doing the best they can under the circumstances. In fact, it is working moms who traditionally have given up their jobs, their livelihood and future prospects to care for their children when no one else is there for them.

They don't deserve to be bashed. They deserve to be applauded. Even more important than applause, though, they deserve better pay, better working conditions, better child care options and more flexible work options. With real support, real families could thrive. @

Single Fathers Face Child Care Dilemma, Too

Flexible work options, child care assistance and other key workplace policies would go a long way to assist all members of today's working families—including the growing number of single fathers in the workforce.

The Census Bureau recently found that the number of single fathers who have custody of their children increased by 25 percent in the past three years, from 1.7 million to 2.1 million in 1998. These dads are experiencing firsthand the problems single working mothers long have been grappling with, such as finding quality child care and taking time off from work to care for a sick child.

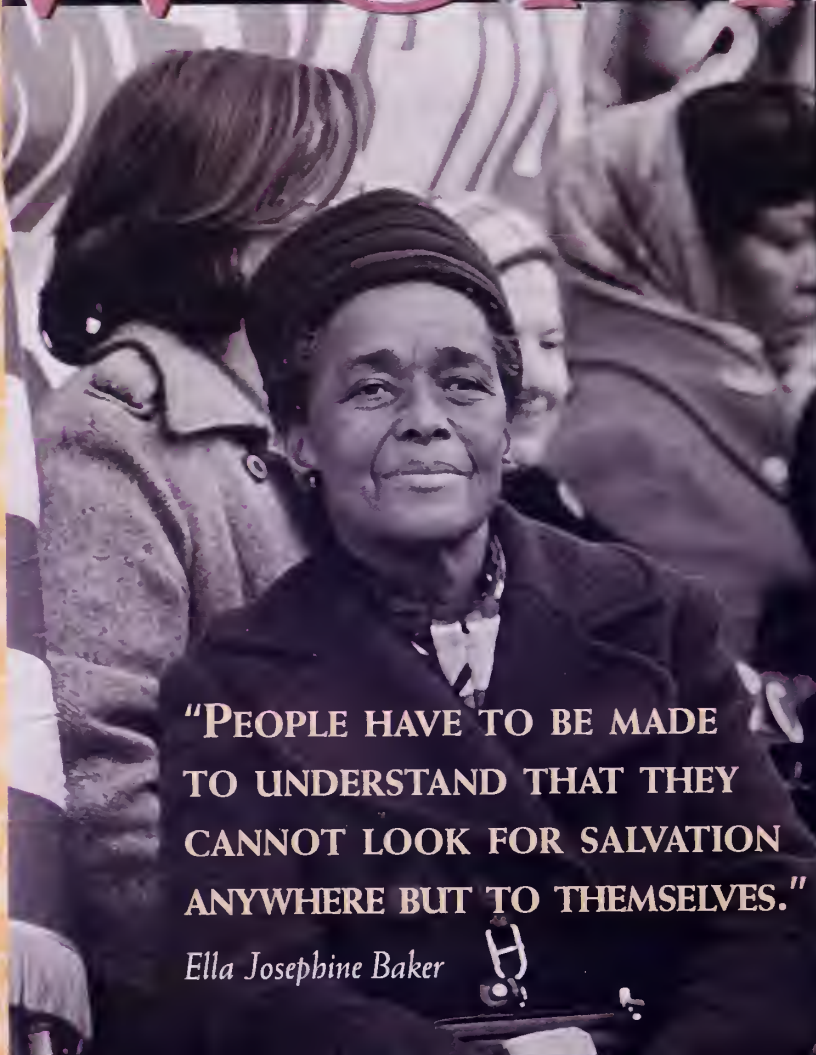
Daneek Miller, a New York City bus driver and Amalgamated Transit Union member, is negotiating with his employer to start a child care resource and referral service. For years, Miller, a single father, brought his kids with him to work at 4:30 in the morning. "You cannot drive a bus and worry about your children," says Miller, a union activist with New York's joint state federation-central labor council child care project. "Even if you aren't a single parent, everybody works," he says. "Child care is a matter of quality of life."

—Laureen Lazorovici

"THE ONLY THING THAT IS
REALLY WORTHWHILE IS
CHANGE—AND IT'S COMING."

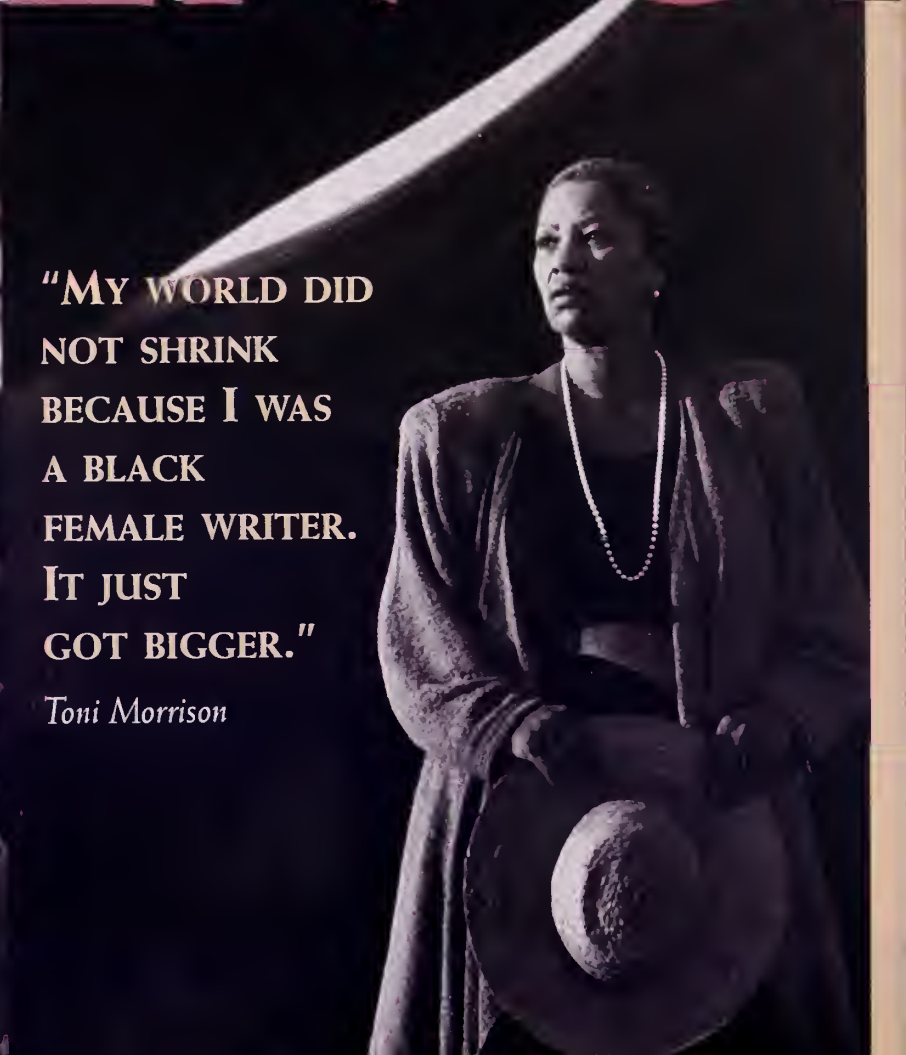
Septima Poinsette Clark

WOMEN OF



"PEOPLE HAVE TO BE MADE
TO UNDERSTAND THAT THEY
CANNOT LOOK FOR SALVATION
ANYWHERE BUT TO THEMSELVES."

Ella Josephine Baker



"MY WORLD DID
NOT SHRINK
BECAUSE I WAS
A BLACK
FEMALE WRITER.
IT JUST
GOT BIGGER."

Toni Morrison

"I AM SICK AND
TIRED OF BEING SICK
AND TIRED. WE
MUST STAND UP FOR
OUR FREEDOM."

Fannie Lou Hamer



HOPE

T

hese photographs were drawn from a series of posters honoring "Women of Hope" and a book by the same name. The posters were created by Bread and Roses, the cultural project of 1199 SEIU Health and Human Services Employees Union. Bread and Roses sprang from the belief that a union should also nourish the hearts and minds of members and their families.

✿ The "Women of Hope" program is a major focus of 1199, whose members, mostly women of color, and their families, rarely see themselves reflected in role models portrayed in the media. The goal of the poster series is to provide images of women, strong and courageous, inspired to fight against injustice. Through their poems and stories and many achievements, they inspire us to live and work in ways that help shape a fairer world. ✿ As Gloria Steinem said: "Women of Hope will inspire all Americans, especially our youth, who have been denied the knowledge that greatness looks like them." @

Excerpted from Women of Hope: African Americans Who Made a Difference, written by Joyce Hansen. \$16.95. Scholastic Press. Also available: the SEIU Women of Hope calendar, which includes AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson. \$10. Four 12-poster sets with study guides: African American Women of Hope; Asian American Women of Hope; Latina Women of Hope; Native American/Hawaiian Women of Hope; and International Women of Hope. Bread and Roses Distribution Center, P.O. Box 1154, Eatontown, N.J. 07724. For bulk sales information, call 212-631-4565.

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS: SEPTIMA CLARK/BRIAN LANKER; ELLA BAKER/CHARMIAN READING; TONI MORRISON/BRIAN LANKER; FANNIE HAMER/CHARMIAN READING

Organizing: Unions representing 50,000 workers in Puerto Rico are now launching new campaigns across the island.



MARK SMESTAD

“The Most Massive Organizing Campaign... Ever”

After a decades-long fight for the right to organize, the island’s 150,000 public employees marked Jan. 1 as the first day they could join together in unions and bargain collectively

By **Laureen Lazarovici**

Puerto Rico's public-sector employees—more than 150,000 school janitors, prison guards, hospital nurses, clerical workers and others—have never had the right to bargain with their employers to improve their lives and communities by negotiating better wages, family-friendly work schedules and respect on the job.

Now all that has changed.

Public employees in Puerto Rico “want better working conditions and a process by which their voices will be heard,” says George Saleeby, regional director for the Food and Commercial Workers, one of several unions organizing workers on the island. Public employee wages are so low, the workers who administer the food stamp program qualify for food stamps themselves, union officials say.

Several unions already are signing up potential new union members and filing for elections. “The island could go from 10 percent organized to 30 percent organized in two years,” says Allison Porter, director of the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute. Adds Saleeby: “For us, this is the most massive organizing campaign...” He pauses for a moment: “Ever.”

“This is a first step for real growth of the federation in Puerto Rico,” says Jose Rodriguez, president of the Puerto Rico Federation of Labor and UNTS/SEIU president. “It will position us to organize other workers and to grow the Puerto Rico labor movement, putting the federation in a position of power and muscle to get better conditions for workers and their families, to have more political power and to create better economic conditions for Puerto Rico.”

Bilingual organizers forge the future

The organizing campaign in Puerto Rico is exceptional because of the potential to enable thousands of workers on the island to gain a voice at the workplace. At the same time, the campaign is training dozens of new organizers whose skills will be invaluable across Puerto Rico and the rest of the United States.

To prepare for upcoming campaigns, the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute and affiliate

unions have trained more than 120 new organizers—many of them Latino and bilingual—who also can be deployed in U.S. organizing efforts among Spanish-speaking workers in the poultry and hospitality industries and in the service sector, where job growth is particularly high.

“We have 10 organizers on the ground and plan to put in more,” says Phil Wheeler, director of UAW Region 9A, which includes

Puerto Rico, where the UAW represents 10,000 workers. “We’re training new organizers from our membership.”

The American Federation of Teachers is deploying leaders and member volunteers from AFT local unions that include Puerto Rican members, such as New York, Hartford, Conn., and Philadelphia. “So you’ve got a teacher talking to a teacher,” says Nancy Morales, Puerto Rico project director for AFT. “They know what it’s like to have a contract and what it’s like to be an AFT member,” she says, adding that she hopes newly organized Puerto Rican members will eventually aid teachers’ organizing efforts in Texas and other southwestern states.

“We are looking for rank-and-filers to learn how to run an organization,” says Jimmy Torres, AFL-CIO Puerto Rico field director. “We are building stronger organizations. People want to engage in collective bargaining—that’s what they’ve been fighting for for years and years.”

A long battle for collective bargaining

Before passage of the new collective bargaining law, Puerto Rico’s public employees’

HERE'S A SAMPLE OF UNION ORGANIZING EFFORTS IN PUERTO RICO:

- AFSCME is working to organize employees in more than 15 commonwealth agencies, including the family services and natural resources departments, and is working with the International Union of Police Associations in the corrections department. Prison guards face security risks because there are often too many prisoners per guard, organizers say.
- AFT wants to bring collective bargaining to more teachers and school professionals. In addition to improving wages, a stronger union will help teachers stave off voucher proposals offered by some government officials.
- Fire Fighters are organizing among 2,000 fire fighters.
- SEIU is working to extend the union advantage to school janitors and maintenance workers, as well as health care workers and emergency technicians throughout Puerto Rico. Because public hospitals and clinics are set to be sold by 2000, SEIU plans to use collective bargaining to win protections for workers.
- UAW is organizing school cafeteria and warehouse employees within the education department, as well as workers at the departments of agriculture, transportation, public works, the environmental quality board and others.
- UFCW has mounted campaigns in the tax collection, recreation, labor and housing departments.

Several unions also are running joint campaigns. For instance, SEIU and AFSCME are working together to organize school secretarial, administrative, technical and clerical workers. AFSCME has an organizing drive with UAW for workers in food service, family services, transportation and public works.

“We believe it is wise and necessary to construct a bargaining alliance because we are dealing with the same employer—the government,” says Paul Booth, AFSCME organizing director. “We need to work together and coordinate.” ☐

ORGANIZING ACROSS THE OCEAN

Eduardo Peña began working for UFCW while he was still a college student, putting together a committee of workers to lobby for the law that would eventually give public-sector workers in Puerto Rico the right to organize. After graduating from the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute, he spent time in New Orleans, working on the victorious campaign at the city's convention center. Now he's back in Puerto Rico, signing up workers at the treasury department and the industrial commission, which handles workers' compensation appeals. "Our campaigns are looking real good," he says.

Like many other Puerto Ricans, Peña has relatives in the mainland United States and would someday like to return here to organize. "I want to help my brothers and sisters in the states at the poultry campaign," he says. @

rights on the job were limited. They could "meet and confer," but they could not bargain binding contracts. The law has prevented AFSCME, AFT, Fire Fighters, SEIU, UAW and UFCW and other unions, which currently represent about 50,000 public-sector workers, from creating a level playing field in the workplace by negotiating agreements.

In 1995, 28 years after unions launched the campaign for collective bargaining, the measure passed in one house of the legislature but failed in the other. That's when a multiunion coalition formed, launching a multipronged media campaign and involving rank-and-file public employees in the lobbying blitz. The unions also successfully incorporated the right to organize in the platforms of Puerto Rico's three main political parties.

In the face of harsh opposition from the island's chamber of commerce, the union effort convinced several legislators to cross party lines and vote for a collective bargaining law. The governor signed the bill on Feb. 25, 1998.

Meeting the challenges ahead

"The workers understand they need to organize, but they are afraid. They don't know what to expect," says Avelino Gonzales, who is working with AFSCME to organize prison guards.

Yet workers want their voices to be heard, says Rodriguez. "We've seen workers get excited about getting a voice." Olivera says he has found that "folks are very willing to talk about their issues and enter into a dialogue."

Although the new law says the govern-



GERARDO MANZANO

Leading the way: The AFL-CIO Organizing Institute and affiliate unions trained 120 lead organizers—many of them Latino and bilingual—to help spearhead union organizing drives across Puerto Rico.

ment can't officially mount any opposition, that hasn't stopped some supervisors from blocking union access to workers, union leaders say. And because Puerto Rico is home to a vibrant movement of unions not affiliated with the AFL-CIO, many of these independent groups are courting government workers.

Some independent unions have become part of AFL-CIO unions, and unions stood together in solidarity during a general strike last summer when the government



MICHEL MALDENADO

Growing strong: Myra Rivera, vice president of Local 2082, Servidores Públicos Unidos/AFSCME and a translator at the department of Natural Resources, talks with botanist and Local 2082 member Vicente Maldonado.



MARK SMESTAD

Signing up: SEIU is organizing school janitors, maintenance workers and health care workers across Puerto Rico.



moved to privatize the telephone company. But AFL-CIO union leaders say that when necessary, they are ready to compete with independent unions. "People want a union with strong roots in Puerto Rico and with ties to a large international union," says UFCW's Saleeby. "Our ties to a large organization mean we have the resources to put 17 people on the ground, the resources to get the law passed and the ability and willingness to meet with law-makers from both parties," he says.

Another challenge union organizers face is the continuing controversy over Puerto Rico's political status. Currently, it is a U.S. commonwealth. Some residents support that status, others want it to become the 51st state and a smaller group thinks it should be an independent nation. A non-binding Dec. 13 plebiscite did nothing to clarify the issue, showing islanders split. While the issue doesn't directly affect union organizing, it does dominate the political debate.

"People here are very politicized, and organizers have to be savvy about that," says Eddie Olivera, who is supervising OI interns. "The challenge is communicating that the union isn't about politics, it is about dignity at work."

Staying above the fray has worked. "Our success is due to our dogged pursuit of multipartisanship," says AFSCME Organizing Director Paul Booth. And, eventually, the organizing effort could help workers gain new political power. "The priority of our members should be to make each [political] party responsive to workers' rights," says SEIU Puerto Rico



On the move: UFCW has mounted campaigns in Puerto Rico's tax collection, recreation and labor departments.

UFCW

Organizing Director Hector Figueroa. For instance, unions will want to be active on state budget issues and improve the law by adding the right to strike to it.

It is clear that the effort to organize public employees in Puerto Rico will help workers improve the lives of their families and their communities. But it has the potential to send ripples on the island and across the ocean.

"As people unionize, there will be a union employee in every family or extended family," notes UFCW organizer Eduardo Peña. "Once people see how family members benefit [from being in a union], that will make it easier when we want to organize, say, the Wal-Mart."

UAW's Wheeler agrees. "If you can get 150,000 workers better wages, benefits and working conditions, it always rubs off somehow." @

ACTION BOX

Public employees on the U.S. mainland can mail messages of solidarity to their Puerto Rican counterparts to:

Puerto Rico Federation of Labor,
P.O. Box 19689, Fernandez Juncos
Station, Santurce, Puerto Rico 00910;
or e-mail to 104525.2447@com-
puserve.com. @



Moe Aye's experience is not uncommon for political activists targeted by Burma's military junta for engaging in human rights activities.

“F

or the first two days they gave me no water, for three days no food and for the whole four days I wasn't allowed to sleep.

The days and nights were crammed together indistinguishably and filled only with the sound of beatings, questions and abuse,” Aye told human rights activist Michele Keegan.

Keegan, testifying before the House International Operations and Human Rights Subcommittee in September, read Aye's quote and told about the thousands of other Burmese political activists who have been detained, imprisoned and abused. Keegan, a U.S. citizen, was one of 17 activists sentenced to five years in prison and then deported last August for “attempting to create civilian unrest”—for distributing business card-sized messages of solidarity with Burmese citizens.

BY DAVID KAMERA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BLACK STAR

DIRTY BUSINESS

By almost any measure, Burma is a poster child for human and worker rights violations:

- Fully 10 percent of the country's economic output is produced by 800,000 forced laborers who often receive no compensation, says the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

- From 1992 to 1995, 2 million Burmese were forced to work without pay to build roads, railways and bridges, according to Human Rights Watch Asia.

- Soldiers systematically use civilians for logistical support to build facilities, carry supplies and equipment and act as human shields during combat, according to the International Labor Organization.

- By 1997, nearly 300,000 Burmese were

refugees in Thailand, Bangladesh and India, according to the Open Society Institute, which reports that up to a million more have been forced to relocate within their own country.

- Burma is the world's top heroin exporter, and its military has been implicated in the drug's production and trade.

Through the efforts of unionists and human rights activists, corporations doing business with Burma increasingly are being held accountable for supporting the brutal regime.

Burma, or Myanmar, as its military rulers call it, is a land of poverty, civil war and oppression. After a 1988 military coup ended 25 years of self-imposed isolation, the Burmese people voted overwhelmingly

for the National League of Democracy, an opposition party. But the junta, which named itself the State Law and Order Restoration Council, imposed martial law and arrested the party's leaders, including Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, whose travel and speech are still tightly regulated. Now calling itself the State Peace and Development Council, the regime continues to violate the rights of Burmese citizens, including the right to organize and form independent trade unions.

Allegations of rights abuses convinced the Labor Department to conduct a comprehensive study, released last September after Burmese authorities refused to grant visas to a U.S. research team. "There is no freedom of association. The Burmese people are sub-



Holding Corporations Accountable for Supporting Burma's Brutal Regime



From 1992 to 1995, 2 million Burmese were forced to work without pay to build roads, railways and bridges, according to Human Rights Watch Asia.

jected to forced labor, and child labor appears to be increasing," reports Labor Secretary Alexis Herman.

"Companies and governments investing in the country—many in projects with the army as partners—can no longer claim ignorance of the situation on the ground," says Amnesty International. "The directors of these companies must seriously examine their operations in Myanmar to ensure that their presence is not contributing to human rights violations."

Some already have. Under pressure from trade unionists, human rights activists,

consumers and shareholders, several multinational corporations, such as PepsiCo, Levi Strauss, Eastman Kodak and Anheuser-Busch, have stopped trading with Burma. And while activists in communities and on campuses around the United States are raising the discomfort level for those still there, their efforts are sometimes met with fierce opposition by U.S. corporations.

In response to reports of widespread human and worker rights violations, Massachusetts became the first state to craft a bill that would penalize companies with ties to

Burma while doing business with the state, following the example of more than 20 U.S. cities that have restricted Burmese imports. By standing up for human rights in faraway Asia, Massachusetts prompted the European Union and Japan to file a complaint with the World Trade Organization opposing Massachusetts' actions.

In response, the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions, which represents some 20 million workers worldwide, urged the EU to withdraw its complaint and "sever all trading links with Burma until democracy is restored there." ICEM pointed to the ILO's findings: "Forced laborers, including those sick and injured, are frequently beaten or otherwise physically abused by the soldiers, resulting in serious injuries. Some are killed, and women performing compulsory labor are raped or otherwise sexually abused by soldiers."

A federal judge in November said the Massachusetts statute unlawfully interfered with the U.S. government's ability to dictate foreign policy. While that decision is being appealed, union and community activists around the country are working to ensure that business with Burma's rogue regime be denounced and corporate responsibility be encouraged.

Apologists for multinational corporations argue that change in Burma can best be brought about by constructive engagement—and the supposedly civilizing influence of a western economic presence. But "constructive engagement is a euphemism for doing business with thugs," Sen. Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) says. "Foreign investment in Burma provides hard currency for the [regime]."

Doug Steele of the Burma Fund, a research and educational group working for a peaceful transition to democracy, says: "As Archbishop Desmond Tutu has noted, Burma is the South Africa of the '90s in terms of how constructive engagement is an excuse for ignoring human rights while going about business as usual." @

Taking Action

Here's what you can do to help end the brutal system of forced labor in Burma:

- Contact the Free Burma Coalition for information on current boycott campaigns and a list of state, county and city governments that have enacted or are considering selective purchasing laws, 202-777-6009; e-mail: zarni@freeburmacoalition.org and check out the website at www.freeburmacoalition.org.
- Call or write your local elected officials to express support for such ordinances.
- For a list of American companies still doing business in Burma, click on "Investors in Terror" (<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/3108>). Write the companies' CEOs demanding that they withdraw. If you own stock, consider offering a shareholder resolution mandating divestiture.



KIDS RALLY AGAINST GUESS?

When sixth-graders at Boston's Workman's Circle Shule Sunday school began studying the history of immigrant workers in sweatshops, they decided to put the Jewish values they were learning into action. After taking a vote, they organized a rally in front of a

Guess? clothing store to protest child labor, the low wages and poor working conditions in much of the garment industry.

"We are here because we want to make a difference and fight for those who work in bad conditions for very little pay," the students said

in a statement they wrote themselves. "We think if we inform people about these bad conditions, maybe these conditions will get changed." The kids also chided Guess? for firing workers who try to unionize and for moving the company's factory from Los Angeles to Mexico, "where people are poorer so they need to be employed by Guess? to support their families."

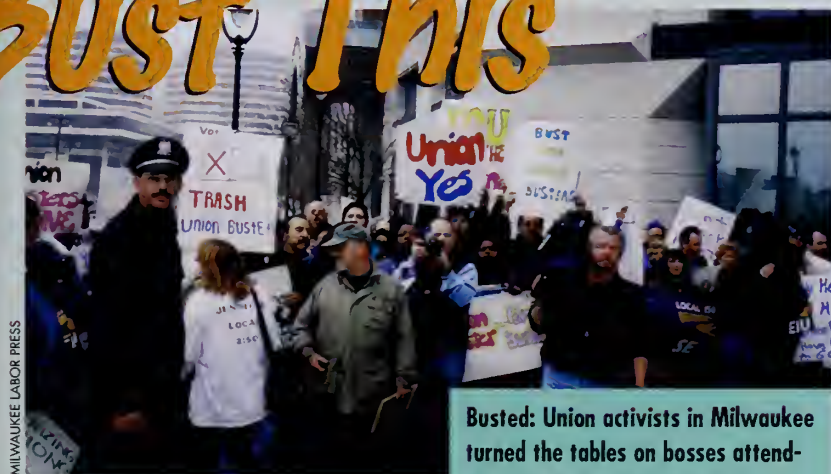
"I've learned that it is not a perfect world and that we need to support others so they can have a better life," said 11-year-old Sara Skvirsky.

More than 100 students, ranging in age from six to 12, and parents joined the Dec. 6 march and rally. Massachusetts AFL-CIO President Robert Haynes and members of UNITE also attended. ☐



No kidding: Boston children organize a rally to protest the sweatshop conditions of workers making clothing for Guess?

Bust This



Busted: Union activists in Milwaukee turned the tables on bosses attending a union-busting seminar.

High-priced, lawyer-for-hire union busters make their living disrupting the lives of workers and their families. So Milwaukee area union members thought a little turnabout was more than fair play.

While some 300 workers rallied outside the downtown Wyndam Hotel, eight union protestors marched straight into an "Operating Union Free in the 21st Century" seminar, held by the law firm Wessels and Pautch, for a little legal action of their own.

They read a four-count "indictment" charging Wessels and Pautch and the bosses who hired them with attempting to

deny workers the right to organize. The lawyers pleaded "no contest," packed up their materials and left the room—after calling the police, who arrested the eight protestors.

The in-your-face tactic was "worth the hassle of the arrests" because the union busters now say they will never hold a seminar in Milwaukee again, says John Goldstein, secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee County Labor Council. Also as a result of the action, several county supervisors and other elected officials condemned Wessels and Pautch's union-busting tactics. ☐

Seeing RED

Unionized news anchors at Chicago's NBC and CBS affiliates literally were seeing red over unfair concession demands by management in contract negotiations at both stations. The AFTRA members wore black and red on the air Dec. 14 to show they meant business about fighting the networks' proposals to increase the number of temporary anchors and reporters.

This was the second time in a month the workers had protested the contract proposals on the air. They wore black during a newscast in November.

Bargaining resumed Dec. 17, the first meeting since September. Union members say they repeated the protest to drive home that the issues were important. "In my opinion, management has a short attention span," said Eileen Willenborg, executive director of Chicago AFTRA. ☐

TURNING OUT A CROWD WITH

STREET HEAT



When central labor councils need to turn out a crowd on short notice, they don't have time to build a cadre of activists from scratch. CLCs find that permanent workplace and neighborhood-based mobilization structures—those not tied to a particular issue or election—are the key to mobilizing supporters quickly and effectively in Street Heat activities that help build Union Cities, the AFL-CIO's program for strengthening the labor movement at the local level and increasing union membership.

Setting up the structures takes a long time and a lot of hard work. It's essential to lay the groundwork early by building a core group of activists. Here are steps CLCs take to create effective Union Cities programs:

- Form a mobilization committee, ideally composed of a steering committee, coordinators from individual unions, captains for key tasks and neighborhood mobilization coordinators. To increase affiliates' involvement, demonstrate how Union City strategies, such as changing to organize, building community coalitions and educating members, works for them.
- Expand your base with volunteers. People already active in other community efforts, such as food banks, are likely to support your issue and turn out for Street Heat if you reach out and educate them.
- Build worksite bases. Designate a key person at each worksite to spread the word. Give each person a short list of people to contact. Make mobilization a central part of your organizing work.
- Create a database of activists, not just union members, who have attended events and are likely to do so again. For instance,

have sign-in sheets at actions. Keep lists current.

• Look to retirees. Many keep close ties with their unions, and they're available at times when many union members are at work—but only if you've already built lasting relationships geared toward rapid mobilization.

• Make your union hall a center for community activities and services to establish a connection with people otherwise unrelated to your union. Make the union a part of their families.

• Educate. Street Heat actions create an environment for conveying our message and bringing a community together around common objectives—a key component of the Union Cities strategy.

• Create a sense of belonging. Distribute caps, t-shirts, buttons and other union clothing to help new activists feel the momentum. Keep them informed of campaign developments.

• Reciprocate. Be sure you and your members support the actions and activities of the groups that turn out for your events. Mobilize around their struggles.

Software to track activists is available from the AFL-CIO Field Mobilization Department (free if you have Paradox, \$10 if you don't). E-mail your request to jbedwell@affcio.org or call Jeanne Bedwell at 202-637-5359.

Street Heat: Mobilizing to Win, an activist's toolkit for building union and community strength, also is available for \$3.05. AFL-CIO Support Services, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; 202-637-5041. ☐

Q&A

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR FRONTLINE ACTIVISTS

Q. Our union has been unable to organize a local company, so we believe the next best thing is to help the workers there find better jobs in union shops. But the workers have signed "noncompete" agreements, meaning they have agreed not to work in the industry for one year if they leave their current employment. How legally binding are these types of agreements?

A. The rules governing the enforceability of such agreements vary from state to state. Generally, courts dislike noncompete agreements because they interfere with a person's ability to earn a living. Such agreements typically will not be enforced if the restrictions place unrea-

sonable time or geographic limitations, and if the employee did not have access to trade secrets or other confidential business information. In general, to be legally binding, a non-compete agreement must not place an undue burden on an employee's ability to find new employment.

Q. Workers here are concerned about rumors that our company will shut down shortly. Don't they have to give us adequate notice before doing that?

A. Here's what Deborah H. Eisen, Weinstein, Eisen & Levine, Los Angeles, says: In 1988, Congress passed the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) requiring certain employers to provide at least 60 days' advance notice to employees or their representatives of a plant closing or mass layoff. Businesses are subject to WARN Act requirements if they employ either 100 or more full-time employees or 100 or more employees (including part-time employees)

who, in the aggregate, work at least 4,000 hours per week including overtime. A "mass layoff" is defined as a workforce reduction that results in unemployment at a single worksite during any 30-day period for 33 percent of employees (affecting 50 or more employees) or where 500 or more employees are affected.

For an employer to comply with the Act, notice must be provided to each of the affected employees or their union.

Employees may recover back pay for each day of violation up to 60 days and any benefits due them. If the employer fails to pay the worker the amount owed within three weeks of the shutdown or layoff, the employer may be subject to penalties by a unit of local government of up to \$500 per day for each day of the violation. ☐

What's your question?

Send a letter, fax or e-mail to: **America@work**, AFL-CIO, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. Phone: 202-637-5010. Fax: 202-508-6908. E-mail: otwork@affcio.org



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Paul Robeson: A Political Portrait, 1948-1959, opened January 9 at the American Labor Museum/Botto House National Landmark in New Jersey. The black-and-white photo collection documents Robeson's political activism in the United States, Austria, England, Germany and the USSR. A lending book, video and cassette library on Robeson and other topics related to immigrants and working people is available to visitors. The museum is located at 83 Norwood St., Haledon, N.J., and is open from Wednesday to Saturday, 1 to 4 p.m. The exhibit runs through April 25. For more information, call 973-595-7953.

BOOK AND VIDEO CATALOGS

Union Communications Services has produced a new 16-page catalog of books that provide tools for union leaders and activists. Catalogs are available through UCS Books at 800-321-2545; fax: 410-626-1353; e-mail: unioncomm@compuserve.com; or visit the website at www.unionist.com.

South End Press, a project of the Institute for Social and Cultural Change, is celebrating 20 years of progressive publishing with a new catalog on a variety of subjects from labor studies, economics and political science to activism, right-wing politics and women's studies. The 48-page catalog lists more than 200 books. Organizations can receive discounts on bulk orders. The catalog is available from South End Press by calling 617-547-4002; fax: 617-547-1333;



1999 CALENDAR

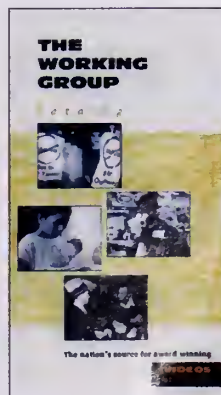
This is a list of conventions and conferences scheduled for 1999 by the AFL-CIO international affiliates and state central bodies. Changes and additions will be reported.

DATE	ORGANIZATION	PLACE
May 5-7	Arizona State Federation	Prescott
May 20-22	Montana State Federation	Kalispell
June 7-18	American Flint Glass Workers	Palm Springs, CA
June 23-26	Utility Workers	Bal Harbour, FL
July 12-14	Communications Workers	Miami Beach, FL
July 22-24	Texas State Federation	Dallas
Aug. 2-6	Plasterers & Cement Masons	Las Vegas
Aug. 11-13	Iowa State Federation	Waterloo
Aug. 19-21	Washington State Federation	Wenatchee
Aug. 23-27	Painters & Allied Trades	Washington, DC
Sept. 12-15	Tennessee State Federation	Nashville
Sept. 13-15	Oregon State Federation	North Bend
Sept. 13-15	Minnesota State Federation	Bloomington
Sept. 15-17	North Carolina State Federation	Winston-Salem
Sept. 17-18	Colorado State Federation	Steamboat Springs
Sept. 21-24	Electronic Workers	Cleveland
Sept. 22-24	Michigan State Federation	Dearborn
Sept. 24-26	Nebraska State Federation	Grand Island
Oct. 4-6	Massachusetts State Federation	Springfield
Oct. 9	Delaware State Federation	Rehoboth Beach
Oct. 20-22	West Virginia State Federation	Charleston
Nov. 4-7	New Hampshire State Federation	N. Conway
Nov. 5-7	Vermont State Federation	Rutland
Dec. 1-3	Indiana State Federation	Indianapolis

e-mail: southend@igc.org; or visit the website at www.lbbs.org/sep/sep.htm.

The Apex Press/Bootstrap Press offers a 32-page catalog of books featuring worker protection, participation and empowerment; corporate power and economic justice; human rights and environmental and economic justice in a global economy; international politics; community revitalization and social economics; and a range of other topics. To receive the catalog, contact The Apex Press/Bootstrap Press at 800-316-2739 or 914-271-6500.

The Working Group's new 28-page catalog features work-related videos appropriate for showing at union meetings. Many of the videos are 30 minutes long and include the collection of shows from the *Livelihood* series on working family issues, including "We Do the Work," "Not in Our Town" and "Working in America." To order the catalog, contact The Working



Group at 510-268-WORK; fax: 510-268-3606; or e-mail: wedothework@igc.org.

Publications

Cross Border Links: 1997 Fair Trade and Sustainable Development Directory, edited by Rachel Hays, provides an extensive listing of "fair trade" organizations around the world. The spiral-bound, 129-page book lists groups alphabetically by continent. Each entry provides a group's name, address, phone, fax, e-mail address and website; a description of the organization; links to other groups; resources and background papers. \$10.95. The book is produced by The Resource Center Press of the Interhemispheric Resource Center, which also publishes a labor directory and an environment directory, each at \$5.95. The IRC plans to post all three directories on its website (www.zianet.com/irc1.cbl/) this spring. @

Why Replacing Social Security with Private Accounts Would Be Bad for Working Families

Strengthen

**SOCIAL
SECURITY**

for Working
Families

Today's Unions
afl-cio

Social Security, America's most successful social program, can continue protecting working families if we take prudent steps now to shore it up. But some special interests want to trade Social Security in for private investment accounts. Compare the principles underlying responsible reform with those behind the move for private accounts.

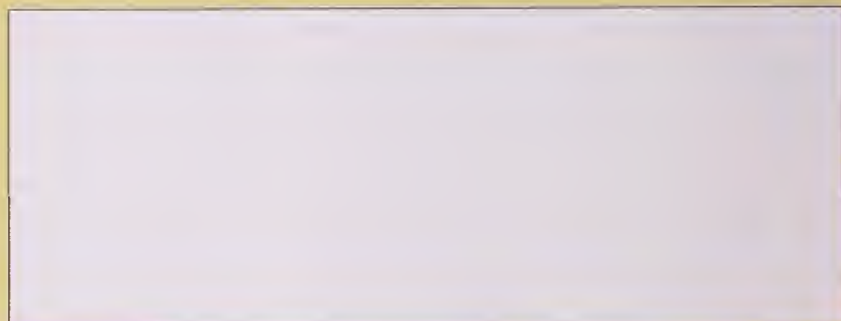


	WHAT SOCIAL SECURITY DOES	WHAT PRIVATE ACCOUNTS WOULD DO
Dependability	Very. For 60 years, Social Security has provided monthly benefits without fail to elderly Americans, people with disabilities and survivors.	Risky. Many workers in Chile and England, which have privatized systems, have suffered huge losses, and the governments have faced higher costs.
Retirement age	Currently 65 for full benefits, gradually rising to 67 by 2027.	70 or higher.
Is a minimum benefit level guaranteed?	Yes. Benefits are based on how long a worker has been employed and the average of his/her lifetime earnings.	No. Total benefit would be based on a worker's luck in the stock market. Guaranteed benefits would be cut by 40 percent or more. Some proposals would use privatized accounts to buy annuities; while monthly benefits would be assured, the total amount of the benefits still would depend on how well or poorly the account fared in the stock market.
Are benefits guaranteed for life?	Yes. Benefits can't run out.	Maybe. If accounts are not required to be paid out as monthly benefits (what accountants call "annuitized"), income would stop when the accounts are exhausted.
Protection against inflation	Yes. Benefit levels rise with prices over time to maintain purchasing power.	Some plans offer no protection against inflation, so investments could lose value over time. If accounts are required to be paid out as inflation-adjusted annuities, there is protection.
Administrative costs	Less than 1 percent of benefits paid each year.	Administrative costs for private insurance are 12 to 14 percent, based on estimates from the American Council on Life Insurance. Chile's costs are as high as 20 percent. These costs come directly out of benefits for recipients.
Who supports it	Working families, unions, seniors, civil rights and women's groups, consumer groups, religious organizations and disability advocates.	Wall Street investment companies, anti-union think tanks, backers of Prop. 226 and school vouchers and their political allies in Washington, D.C.

Call Congress toll-free at

1-877-722-7494

For more information about the
AFL-CIO's campaign to strengthen
Social Security for working families,
call toll-free **1-877-760-2340**
or visit www.aflcio.org/socialsecurity



Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

MARCH 1999

America @work

SO INSIDE:

Building on
Martin Luther
King's Dream
Equal Pay for
Working Families

HEALTH AND SAFETY
**THE UNION
DIFFERENCE**

VOICES

IDEAS AND VIEWS FROM YOU

Say What?

How will your union get members involved in Workers Memorial Day?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue.

America@work

815 16th St., N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20006

Phone: 202-637-5010

Fax: 202-508-6908

e-mail: atwork@afcio.org

Here's What You Say

ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION WILL GET THE MESSAGE TO MEMBERS ABOUT THE "NIKE ECONOMY":

"I did find the [Common Sense Economics] course illuminating. I knew we were being squeezed, but to learn the scope of the economic and political forces that are working against us was surprising. I had some idea that soliciting [political] funds from the members on the shop floor was counterproductive in my effort to instill trust in the members. And I admit I found the actual asking for money distasteful. I still won't like it, but the problems we face require us all to get involved."—Steve Decker, Machinists District Lodge 751, Local A, Seattle

"I ATTENDED THE TRAIN-THE-TRAINER CLASS on Social Security, and it was one of the best classes that I have had in a long time. I have already talked to one group of union people, and I will continue to get the message out! Keep up the great work that you do for everyone!"—Hugh A. Burgoon Sr., SEIU, Pittsburgh, Pa.

[Editor's note: For information on setting up a Common Sense Economics training, call 202-637-5156.]

"I HAVE BEEN URGING OTHERS to help coordinate a precinct delegate program that gets back to the basics....It will start out as a nonpolitical newsletter touching on issues that are important directly to people in the neighborhoods. We hope that by building the trust and support of our fellow neighbors, they will also listen to us when it comes time to give them advice on which candidates will be best for the community...."

—Derek Pennington, IBEW Local 58, Dearborn Heights, Mich.

"I WAS IN THE STATES WORKING WITH DIFFERENT GROUPS on their campaigns and am still working with a group from HERE in Santa Monica about union busting, which was a deep and distressing surprise for an Australian. Anyway, keep up the good work."—Deborah Kelly, Social Change Media, Melbourne, Australia

When you see
unions@work
and our
members@work
and collective power
in our
communities@work,
that's when you see

America@work

"DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA how much gross income a couple filing jointly with two children would have to earn before they went out of the 15 percent bracket?....Answer: \$60,250....Working 50 weeks/year and 40 hours/week, this would come to about \$30/hour. Not many earn that much. Republicans are even reluctant to raise the minimum wage of \$5.15/hour as little as 50 cents. Can you see why a Steve Forbes, with his multimillion income, would love to be in a 15 percent flat tax?"—Leo Duzak, Nashville, Tenn.

"WE DOWN HERE IN BOWLING GREEN, Ohio, are...pressuring Dow Jones & Co. to reach an agreement on...a fair first contract....Dow Jones & Co. refuses to accept standard IAPE/CWA, GCIU, or Mailer Union...workers' rights clauses, including 'just cause' dismissal, seniority, dues check-off, union activity, recall rights and job descriptions with limits. Our...nonworker rights issues are: press/mail department manning and enough weekend time off to be with our families....We are...struggling with another callous newspaper publisher like Gannett and Knight-Ridder: the anti-labor, anti-family Dow Jones & Co., publisher of *The Wall Street Journal*."—Jack O'Hare

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America@work

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CONTENTS



4 CURRENTS

UNITE members' uniform victory

Limo drivers ride in style with IAM

Out and organizing

21 OUT THERE

Mighty mouse pad

Suspended in action

22 TOOLBOX

Organizing around health and safety issues

23 HOMEPAGE

Exhibit: Every Worker an Organizer

Conferences:
Forging Labor's Future
Community Services
Union Cities



8

BUILDING ON KING'S DREAM

Union activists honored Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of social and economic justice with four days of community service and religious action in Birmingham

10

HEALTH AND SAFETY: THE UNION DIFFERENCE

Health and safety committees and strong contract safety language give union workers a big advantage over nonunion workers in protecting their health—and saving their lives—on the job

15

EQUAL PAY FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Each year, America's working families lose \$200 billion because women are not paid the same wages as men

17

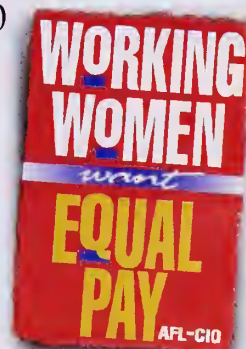
ASK A WORKING WOMAN

Distribute this survey widely so working women nationwide can set the priorities for change in the workplace

20

HEART OF THE MOVEMENT

Growing up, AFSCME activist Tony Padilla watched his father come to the aid of working families—and he wanted to do the same



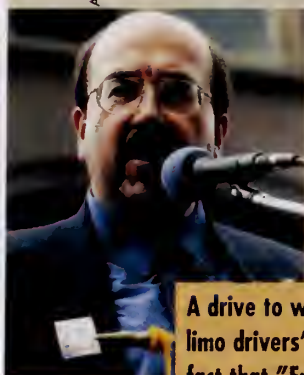
Cover Photograph: Earl Dotter

CURRENTS

Riding in Style

In January, 700 drivers at New York's largest "black-car" operator, Elite Limousine Plus, rode to victory with a first contract after steering a steady course at the bargaining table for two years following their vote to join the Machinists in 1996. New York City's fleet of black cars, chauffeured by 12,000 mostly immigrant drivers, provides limousine service for the city's law firms, banks and investment houses.

ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN



With franchise charges, the cost of a car and other fees, aspiring limo drivers need about \$60,000 up front just to get behind the wheel,

union leaders say. Seeing the job as an opportunity for advancement, recent immigrants borrow the money from their extended families—and, despite putting in 70-hour weeks to earn \$20,000 a year, are tied to their jobs because of their investment.

After the election, the company refused to bargain and joined other limo companies in establishing a \$1 million union-busting fund. Machinists responded with an industry-wide organizing drive, signing up several smaller car firms that hired workers fired from Elite for organizing.

The new pact provides health benefits and free legal assistance, phases out the franchise charge, caps other fees and eliminates a draconian fine system. ☐

A drive to win: IAM President Thomas Buffenbarger said that New York limo drivers' struggle for social justice and economic dignity highlights the fact that "Employers should not be able to hide behind 'independent contractor' subterfuge, and use that to thwart workers rights."

Child Care Union Wins First VICTORY

Teachers and other child care workers at Resources for Human Development in Philadelphia—earning \$6 to \$8 dollars an hour—knew something was wrong when, as child care providers, they couldn't even afford to provide adequate care for their own kids.

"Health insurance was so expensive that some teachers would buy it for their children but not themselves," says Vickie Milhouse, an organizer with the United Child Care Union, an affiliate of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees/AFSCME. So, in late January, the workers voted by 2-to-1 to join the AFSCME-affiliated union.

"We now have input in decisions that impact the quality of our jobs and the services we provide the children we care for," says Sheila Womack, an assistant teacher at Rainbow Central.

Milhouse says accessibility of organizers was key to the campaign's success. Many employees didn't want to meet at their workplaces; instead, they joined organizers at nearby diners.

Launched in 1998, United Child Care joins the Seattle Child-care Union Project as part of growing efforts by child care workers to organize. ☐

Career Expo



CHRIS STEVENS/THE LABOR PAPER

Electricians, bricklayers, plumbers and other building trades members from 10 unions guided eighth-graders during a career expo held by the West Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council in Peoria. "Now the kids know and appreciate what these folks do," says council Executive Director Don Noe. Math teacher Tom Herrman says, "Just to be able to get their hands on the tools and equipment helps them see the opportunities in the construction industry."

Education First

Cleveland's public school students soon will be faced with a new round of standardized tests to help determine whether they'll be promoted to the next grade—and union members who work with the children have launched a program to help them succeed.

The Cleveland Public School's Employees Council, which includes members of the Cleveland Teachers Union/AFT, Firemen and Oilers/SEIU and the Teamsters, is letting the community know how to help stu-

dents prepare for the exams. Union members have distributed 50,000 copies of a brochure, formed a speakers' bureau, held informational breakfasts for parents and made classroom visits.

"We want to show the community and school board that we're all after the same goal," says Vic Collova, business representative for Teamsters Local 407, which represents about 750 bus drivers and attendants. "That goal is what is best for the kids, and education comes first." ☐

Giving Blood

More than 600 people, mostly UAW members, donated blood to help co-workers injured in a Feb. 1 explosion in the power plant at Ford Motor Co.'s Rouge complex in Dearborn, Mich. Two UAW members were killed and a dozen severely burned. Union members can help the victims and their families by giving blood at local American Red Cross facilities



JIM WEST/IMPACT VISUALS

or by sending financial contributions to the Rouge Family Fund, Comerica Bank, P.O. Box 75000, Detroit, Mich. 48275-7650.



Community Coalition: Key to First Contract

When 90 workers struck West Seattle Psychiatric Hospital after months of fruitless contract negotiations, leaders at the Seattle Union Now (SUN) project mobilized its active labor-community coalition to support them—and, in January, SEIU District 1199NW members won their first contract at the facility.

"We've been doing work with religious and community groups and elected officials of both parties for a couple of years in preparation for campaigns like this," says Ron Judd, executive secretary-treasurer of the King County Labor Council. Hundreds of union members and supporters regularly picketed the hospital, enlisted the support of residents near the facility and even got the local chamber of commerce on board. The coalition worked with sympathetic lawmakers to urge the county—which funds the facility—that the hospital should not receive public funds if it does not respect workers' rights.

According to Judd, the victory demonstrates "you can't win without labor sticking together and without the religious and community groups out there with us." ☐

Nearly 75,000 Home Care Workers Join SEIU

In the biggest organizing victory in six decades, nearly 75,000 Los Angeles home care workers joined SEIU Local 434B in February. The 8-1 vote margin means the workers who care for people with disabilities and the elderly in their homes can negotiate better wages, paid vacations, health insurance and respect on the job.

Working with a coalition of consumer, religious leaders and elected officials, SEIU launched the campaign nearly 12 years ago, successfully fighting for a state law that enabled counties to set up public authorities that could act as home care employers. Up to that time, the state classified home care workers as independent contractors and refused to recognize the workers as its employees. The work-

ers successfully battled legal barriers that for many years had artificially labeled them as independent contractors. In 1997, the union won the next step in the process: securing the creation of an L.A. County home care authority—an employer with which home care workers could bargain.

SEIU now has organized 100,000 home care workers in six California counties—and plans to build on the momentum. "From home care workers to nurses and doctors, people who provide health care are joining with patients and consumers to stand up for

quality care," says SEIU President Andrew Stern. "Workers are saying that health care works better when they have a voice." ☐



Home free: Armetress Ramsay (left), and Lillibeth Navarro celebrate SEIU Local 434B's organizing victory among nearly 75,000 L.A. home care workers.

SPOTLIGHT

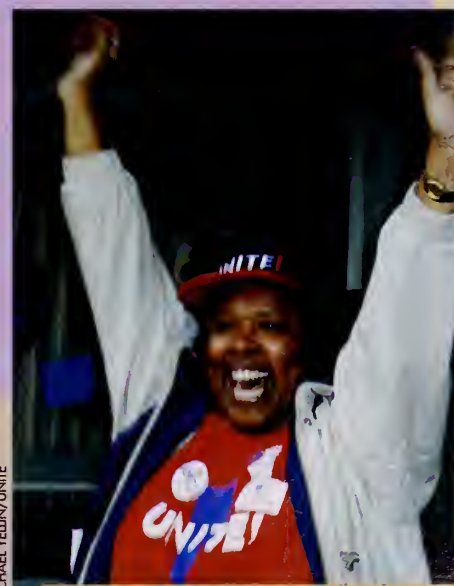
A Uniform Victory at Fechheimer

With support from more than 100 central labor councils nationwide, UNITE and the uniform maker Fechheimer buttoned up an agreement that restores the company's claim that its products are union made.

For years, Fechheimer made uniforms bearing the "Union Made in the U.S.A" label for union workers such as police, fire fighters and postal employees. But last year, the owners closed a union plant in Cincinnati and moved operations to a nonunion plant in San Antonio—and labor councils sprang into action. The Bergen County (N.J.) Labor Council, for instance, hosted the company's CEO at a forum that drew more than 80 people. "I wanted him to know that he was taking on the whole labor movement," says CLC President Philip McLewin.

Following a letter-writing campaign and several more forums spearheaded by other labor councils, Fechheimer recently agreed to stop subcontracting work to nonunion shops. The company also agreed to stay neutral during organizing campaigns at its nonunion facilities.

"This campaign illustrates the tremendous power of the labor movement to establish the right to organize for the thousands of nonunion workers in the uniform industry," says UNITE President Jay Mazur. "Fechheimer deserves some credit for committing to be 100 percent union while some of its competitors continue to use nonunion sweatshops." The effort energized labor councils as well. "It was a wonderful building opportunity for us," says McLewin. "There's been a real uptick in our capacity for mobilizing." ☐



Sewing up success: UNITE member Leveste Citizen celebrates Fechheimer's return to being a 100 percent union shop.

Union 101

AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson meets with Washington, D.C., high school student Kenya Starks, one of thousands of students across the country "shadowing" workers as part of the federal School-to-Work Office's "Job Shadow Groundhog Day." The Metropolitan Washington Council and the AFL-CIO



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

Working for America Institute sponsored 12 Washington-area high school students who visited several unions to learn more about the role of unions.

Building to Last

To build on the successes of Labor '98 and the defeat of Proposition 226 in California, the AFL-CIO is planning a two-year campaign to educate and mobilize members around key working family issues such as Social Security, Medicare, the minimum wage and trade through worksite visits, member-to-member contact, mailings, phone calls and events.

Meeting in Miami Feb. 16-19, the AFL-CIO Executive Council announced the grassroots effort, which will include a massive voter registration drive, a get-out-the-vote effort aimed at union households and allies and the AFL-CIO's 2000 in 2000 campaign to elect union members to public office. The council, which heard reports on last year's organizing efforts that resulted in 475,000 new members, also reviewed unions' successful techniques in organizing and training new organizers.

Council members and more than 500 community residents took part in a Social Security Summit led by American Federation of Teachers President Sandra Feldman. Operating Engineers member Frank Mascari told the gathering that "after a while, your body breaks down. Let's not even talk about raising the Social Security age to 70. Let's lower it, if anything." Workers also testified at a hearing on workers' right to organize, and Vice President Al Gore met privately with community leaders and newly organized workers before speaking at a rally attended by 150 workers.

In other action, the council approved resolutions supporting positive steps to strengthen Social Security and Medicare, and called

for fixing flaws in current and future trade agreements and warned of the dangers of NAFTA's cross-border trucking provisions. ☐



LEN KAMINSKY

1999 priorities: Corporate responsibility and good jobs for workers in part-time, temporary and independent contractor jobs were among the issues discussed by Executive Council members, including (left to right) Postal Workers President Moe Biller, Steelworkers Vice President Leon Lynch and Communications Workers President Morton Bahr.

Teachers Win Wage Battle with New York Archdiocese

Some 500 members of the Federation of Catholic Teachers, an affiliate of Office and Professional Employees Local 153, held a prayer vigil outside St. Patrick's Cathedral to demand fair and equitable wages and pensions last fall. Their dramatic action prompted the Archdiocese of New York to listen—and to bargain.

The more than 3,000 teachers, who historically have been paid far less than the nation's unionized public school teachers, had worked without a contract since last August. Now they have a new contract that includes a 10 percent wage hike over three years retroactive to September. Under the new con-

tract, elementary school faculty members, who are paid less than high school teachers, will see the wage gap eliminated over 12 years, bringing to an end a 30-year battle for better wages. "For the first time, the archdiocese acknowledged it was wrong," says FCT President Michele Cody. The contract also includes improved pension benefits and additional sick leave.

Cody attributes FCT's contract victory to its affiliation with OPEIU, which provided "monumental" assistance during the bargaining, Cody says. "[OPEIU President] Michael Goodwin was invaluable to us." ☐

Students Stage Anti-Sweatshop Sit-Ins

Students at Duke University and Georgetown University staged protests and sit-ins against a proposed "code of conduct" for school-licensed apparel makers that students say does not go far enough to ensure that products bearing the universities' names are not made in sweatshops.

The proposed code, developed by the Collegiate Licensing Co. in response to anti-sweatshop efforts by college students, does not require disclosure of the names and addresses of factories making products bearing school names—information that students say is critical for independent monitors to inspect factory conditions. Nor does it require that manufacturers pay a living wage. Collegiate Licensing is an Atlanta-based company that works with more than 100 schools to license products.

More than 100 students rallied at each school in late January, followed by sit-ins in the presidents' offices to demand that the universities not sign the code. The Duke students ended their sit-in when the school agreed to sign a new measure requiring factory disclosure within a year. At Georgetown, students celebrated Mass in the president's office. Several of the students had gained organizing skills through the AFL-CIO Union Summer program.

In March 1998, Duke adopted the nation's strictest code—including requirements for a living wage and disclosure of factories' names and addresses—which would have been weakened by the proposed Collegiate Licensing code. ☐



UNITE

Taking a stand: Duke University students are fighting to make sure products bearing the school's name are not made in sweatshops.

JERSEY TURNPIKE: NO SWEAT

Folks who regularly drive the East Coast think of the New Jersey Turnpike as an all-American icon. Yet souvenir shops along the famous highway are stocked with goods made by exploited workers in other countries, according to the state federation.

"We are asking the state to set an example for the rest of the country and not buy products from sweatshops in foreign countries," says New Jersey AFL-CIO President Charles Wowkanech.

The state federation's efforts resulted in legislation in the Garden State's Assembly and Senate that would require that all clothing purchased by the state be "Made in the U.S.A." With Chinese human rights activist Harry Wu and Newark Arch-

bishop Theodore McCarrick at his side, Wowkanech told a Trenton press conference that a new coalition, organized with the help of UNITE, will push for the bill's passage. Coalition members include the Jewish Labor Committee, Atlantic Apparel Contractors, League of American Families and state and local officials. @



All-American: New Jersey AFL-CIO President Charles Wowkanech and state federation Secretary-Treasurer Laurel Brennan announce a coalition to ensure that clothing sold in Jersey Turnpike souvenir shops carries the label "Made in the U.S.A."

Out and Organizing

Pride at Work is poised to push a new national agenda to advance equal rights in the workplace.

"We are losing what few civil rights we have gained in many states," says Nancy Wohlforth, co-chair of Pride at Work, the AFL-CIO constituency group for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered workers. Speaking at PAW's "Out and Organizing Convention" in Washington, D.C., in February, Wohlforth said ballot initiatives lost in the 1998 elections "would have granted us not special rights, but simply equal rights." The best way to ensure that PAW members gain their rights is through collective bargaining, says Wohlforth, who serves as business manager of Office and Professional Employees Local 3 in San Francisco.

PAW's immediate plans include launching an all-out campaign to pass the National Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which is expected to be reintroduced in Congress soon. The act, which was introduced in 1997 but never considered, will be reintroduced this session. The act would prohibit discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation and gender identity. PAW plans an "Equality Starts at Home" campaign to urge unions to push for domestic partnership benefits when bargaining contracts. PAW also seeks state equal protection laws. Currently, 11 of 50 states prohibit firing workers on the basis of sexual preference. @

OUT FRONT

What does it mean when employers rob working families of \$200 billion a year by underpaying working women (see page 15)?

It means, for example, that there is twice as much poverty among single working mothers and their children—25.3 percent—as there would be if these moms had equal pay.

It means that each year states lose between \$326 million in Alaska and \$21.8 billion in California from their tax bases and consumer buying power.

It means all levels of government and community organizations must provide life-sustaining services for families that are not earning living wages because of a whole array of low-road employer behavior in addition to unequal pay.

Put it all together and it adds up to another form of corporate welfare. As employers fatten their bottom line by paying workers less than what it costs to feed, shelter and clothe even a small family, they are shifting financial burdens to working families, to government, community groups and congregations.

If corporate America were doing its fair share in providing adequate benefits for workers, would 66 percent of America's uninsured children have a parent who works full time?

If employers were paying wages that ensured workers could feed their families, would 37 percent of adults requesting food assistance in cities be working people? Would low-paying jobs be the number one cause of hunger cited by city officials? Would 24 percent of households receiving food stamps have earned income?

If employers were shouldering a just share of the costs in a booming economy, would the proportion of prime-age workers with earnings below poverty have risen from 13.6 percent in 1974 to 18.2 percent in 1996?

If employers were paying their workers anything like decent wages, would local officials who surveyed 30 major cities estimate that 22 percent of the homeless people there are employed?

As the saying goes: Not just no, but hell no.

Because union members have a voice on the job, we generally don't experience the worst of these hardships. But criminally low pay affects us all by depressing wage rates across the entire lower end of the pay spectrum.

And it undermines America's basic economic contract—that work should be rewarded, that work should pay. @

Additional sources: *The State of Working America 1998-99*, Economic Policy Institute (poverty, wages); *Hunger and Homelessness Survey Summary*, U.S. Conference of Mayors (hunger, homelessness); *The State of America's Children 1998*, Children's Defense Fund (uninsuredness).

More Corporate Welfare

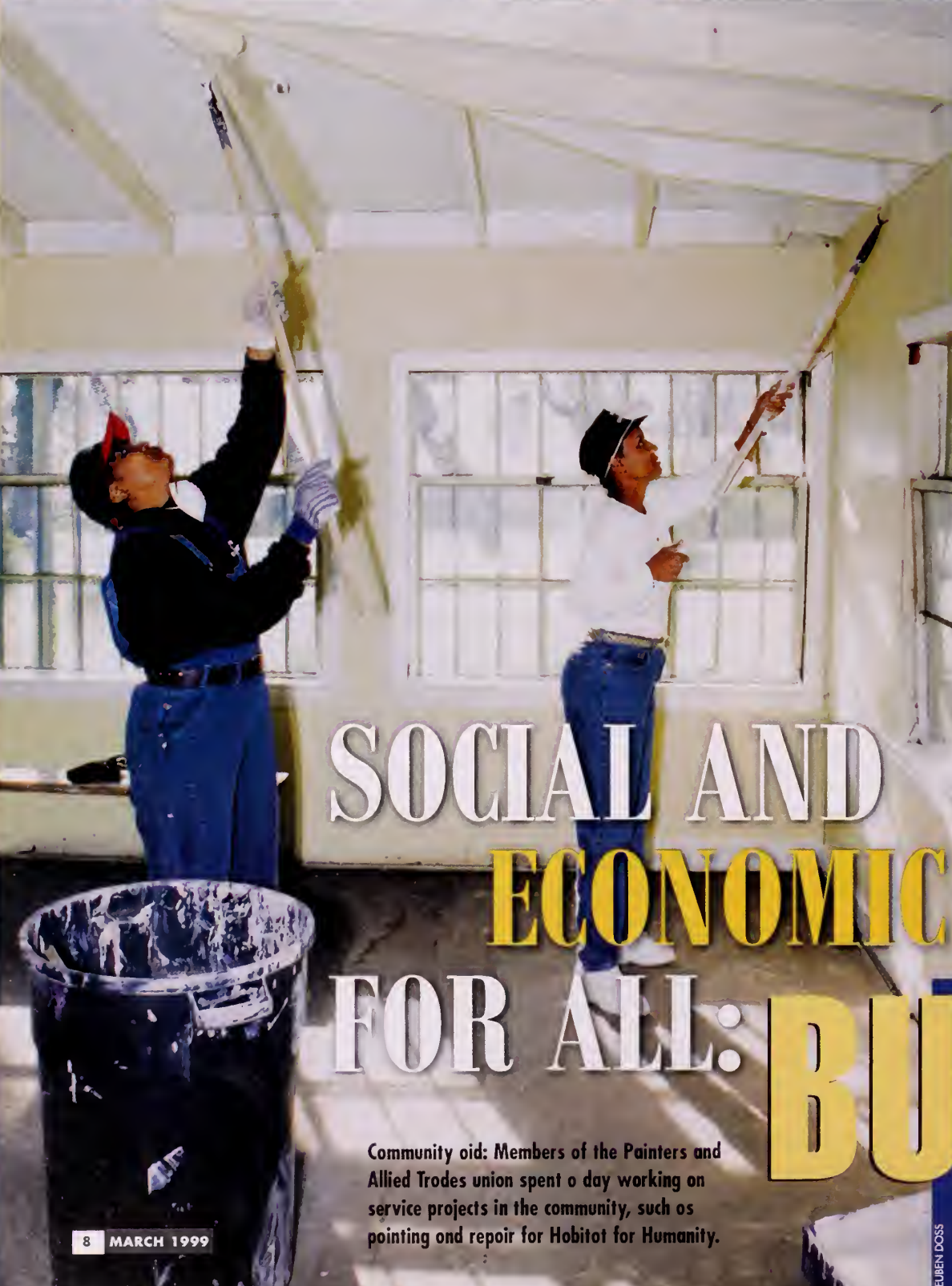


BY JOHN J. SWEENEY



King Day march: Mineworkers President Cecil Roberts joins civil rights leaders in a march through Birmingham, Ala.

THE BIRMINGHAM NEWS/BERNARD TRONCALE



REUBEN DOSS

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR ALL: BUILDING

Community aid: Members of the Painters and Allied Trades union spent a day working on service projects in the community, such as painting and repair for Habitat for Humanity.

S

herri Buffkin and LaTosha Peterson needed their jobs at Smithfield, the world's largest pork processor, to support their small children. So when the two women were asked by their employer to keep the Food

and Commercial Workers out of its Tar Heel, N.C., plant, the women agreed.

Buffkin, who was a manager at the plant, followed management's orders and targeted union supporters for harassment and disciplinary actions at the slightest infraction, consistently denying overtime to the workers, most of whom were African American single mothers. "I was told to write 'em up and write 'em out," she says.

Peterson, who worked for Buffkin, was recruited to join a team of employees who were paid for hours they never worked in exchange for spying on fellow workers and speaking against the union. She even witnessed company sabotage of the union election vote count.

Eventually, both women felt guilty about their decisions and agreed to tell their stories to the National Labor Relations Board, which is hearing unfair labor practices charges filed by the union over Smithfield's tactics in elections in 1994 and 1997.

"I knew I was wrong the whole time," Peterson says. "But when you're taking away from my child, I do what I have to do. Now I know the difference between a union and nonunion job. I'm at a unionized plant, Maidenform, now, and I want to see the same kind of jobs for my kids."

Along with Betty Dumas, a locked-out worker at Avondale shipyard in Louisiana,

By JAMES B. PARKS

Buffkin and Peterson told their stories to the rapt attention of union activists from across the country who gathered in Birmingham, Ala., for the annual celebration of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Jan. 15-18.

The link between King's life and workers such as the three women was clear to the more than 600 participants who took part in a series of events to honor King. "Martin Luther King dedicated himself to making sure that working people had the right to organize to better their lives," says AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer Bill Lucy, who heads the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. Just before his death, King marched with 1,300 sanitation workers in Memphis, Tenn., who were seeking justice and dignity.

"Dr. King understood that workers' rights are civil rights, especially for workers of color," says UNITE Vice President May Ying Chen, an executive board member of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance. "The labor movement delivers a strong and compelling message that all workers, indeed all people who experience any kind of exploitation, can only gain power and make changes if we are able to unite and work together."

Creating community partnerships

Building community alliances is critical to achieving the shared goal of the civil rights and labor movements—making life better for everyone through organized action. Over four days in January, the workers reached out to the Birmingham community in concrete ways. They spent a day working on service projects in the community, such as staffing a toys-for-guns exchange at a local church, cleaning



REUBEN DOSS

out a manufacturing plant to be used as a Habitat for Humanity warehouse, delivering union-made paper products to community organizations and cleaning out a food kitchen storeroom. They rallied in protest of a local Ku Klux Klan demonstration and joined the city's annual march to honor King.

"The partnership between labor and civil rights is critical if we are to keep the gains we have made in the workplace," says Coalition of Labor Union Women President Gloria Johnson.

Organizing: a civil right

Unions are in the forefront of keeping alive King's dream of a better life for all, says Darrius Rollins, 16, of Miami, a member of the Future Labor Leaders club which traveled to Birmingham for the celebration. "Unions are about people being unified. It's important for those of us who will be the next generation in labor to see how unions are trying to keep Martin Luther King's dream alive."

There is a direct relationship between King's dream and unions, says Mine Workers President Cecil Roberts. By organizing workers to speak out for themselves, unions expand opportunities for all people. King's legacy to labor is that no one should be left behind, says Roberts, who recently toured Appalachia to highlight the poverty there.

Keep fighting: UAW Civil Rights Director Joe Davis tells a rally crowd that the labor and civil rights movements can win the fight against racism because "we are the sons and daughters of Martin Luther King and A. Philip Randolph."

"Dr. King was about helping people," says Kim Wilson of UFCW Local 951 in Detroit. "We can't just talk about people joining unions and not reach out to help those in need."

King's message about organizing is especially true today, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney told a packed Sunday morning service in the historic Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, where four young African



REUBEN DOSS

Union supporters: Sherri Buffkin, a manager at Smithfield pork processing plant, and worker LaTosha Peterson tell their stories about employer intimidation in a UFCW organizing campaign at a Birmingham, Ala., gathering.

American girls lost their lives in a 1963 bombing. The nation faces "cruel contradictions" of a robust economy simultaneously with rampant layoffs and the trade-off of good-paying manufacturing jobs for low-wage jobs. But working together, "we can and will continue to make our country a better place to work, to live, to raise our families and to enjoy the bounty our Creator intended for all of us to share." ☐

ON KING'S DREAM

Health and Safety on the Job: **THE UNION** **DIFFERENCE**



When Electronic Workers Local 201 members at General Electric's Lynn, Mass., jet engine plant grew concerned about their exposure to toxic fluids and fumes, they turned to their health and safety committee for help. Now, the committee reports, better equipment and ventilation reduce those risks.

Child welfare caseworkers face increasing threats of violence when they visit homes of abused or neglected children or consult with parents and guardians in the office. In a 1998 AFSCME study, 21 of 29 local unions reported that members had been victims of, or threatened with, violence in the line of duty. With the power of their local unions behind them, workers pressured their agencies to deal with the workplace threats. Today, some permit caseworkers to "buddy up" with a colleague or police officer in unsafe situations. Others provide cell phones for emergencies or training to deal with violence, and many have improved on-site security with panic buttons, guards and other safety equipment.

A Communications Workers survey of 10,000 members who operate computers shows the staggering toll of repetitive motion injuries. A quarter of the respondents reported medically diagnosed problems traced to repetitive motions required on the job, and 70 percent reported hand and wrist pain they believed was job-related. Pointing to declining injury rates at U.S.

West and Southwestern Bell Communications, where the union was able to negotiate strong ergonomic safeguards into the contracts, CWA Safety Director David LaGrande says a greater emphasis in collective bargaining works to strengthen safety and health language.

Local union health and safety committees, the security of a union contract and strong contract safety language give union workers a big advantage over nonunion workers in protecting their health—and saving their lives—on the job.

Workers and their unions know that too many jobs are dangerous and deadly. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures based on 1997 data show 6,218 workers died from traumatic workplace injuries. More than 6.1 million workers reported workplace injuries and illnesses. Repetitive motion injuries account for 64 percent of all workplace illnesses.

BLS statistics also have shown downward trends in workplace injuries. From 1994 to 1997, the reported injury and illness rate dropped by 15 percent. The

BY MIKE HALL

nation's most prevalent workplace illness—repetitive motion injuries—dropped from 332,000 cases to 281,000.

But the BLS numbers tell only a part of the story. They account only for injuries and illnesses in the private sector. Federal, state and local public-sector workers are not included. In addition, the bureau acknowledges that many workplace illnesses are not reflected in its reports because they are not properly diagnosed or don't develop until someone leaves the job. Employer incentive programs that reward low injury rates—or discipline workers who report injuries—may also reduce reported rates. Add the fact that the numbers come from employer reports that are not validated by the BLS and the toll soars, according to *Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect*, the AFL-CIO's 1998 profile of worker health and safety.

Business and industry groups—taking heart from the BLS indications of downward trends in on-the-job injuries and deaths—are joining together to fight new ergonomic standards, stymie the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's attempts to target inspections to hazardous workplaces where the largest number of workplace deaths occur and lobby Congress to dilute OSHA's inspection and enforcement powers.

Anti-worker lawmakers on Capitol Hill and their industry counterparts continue their attacks against strong workplace health and safety standards. Meanwhile, OSHA, hamstrung with an inadequate budget, fields an understaffed inspection

force—2,132 federal and state inspectors for 7 million workplaces—while serious safety violations result in relatively weak penalties. That's why it's critical that union health and safety committees continue to educate and mobilize workers around safety issues and hold employers account-

able for providing safe working conditions.

Here's how a multiunion coalition of building trades unions joined together to ensure worker safety on a massive Boston tunnel and road project and how two local unions recently handled health and safety problems on their shop floors.

"We're going to be there every day, and we're going to continue to enforce safe practices."

—Bob Moretti, an administrator for the New England Laborers Health and Safety Fund

CASE STUDY

Multiunion Action

Safety is paramount when a project is so large it requires 4,000 construction workers building 161 lane-miles of highway—half in tunnels—in a 7.5-mile corridor; digging enough dirt to fill the New England Patriots' Foxboro Stadium 13 times; pouring 3.8 million cubic yards of concrete and installing enough reinforced steel to girdle the equator with a one-inch steel bar.

A multiunion Labor-Management Health and Safety committee is playing a major role in ensuring worker safety is the top priority in one of the largest highway construction projects in U.S. history—tearing down Boston's decades-old elevated central artery and building a new surface and tunnel system to handle up to a quarter of a million vehicles a day by 2010.

Bob Moretti, an administrator for the New England Laborers Health and Safety Fund, says more than two dozen unions working for the 106 contractors on the job closely monitor safety at each worksite every day, while a multiunion committee focuses on overall safety for the "Big Dig."

When workers on the project began tearing down the dilapidated highway, union safety experts were concerned about possible corner-cutting by some of the many contractors and managers who saw the workers' representatives as nit-picking obstructionists.

Dan Bianco, a Laborers Fund representative on the multiunion committee, says while the project's general contractor, the Bechtel Corp., has a strong safety record, with so many contractors and subcontractors, the multiunion committee ensures an across-the-board emphasis on safety.



On the "Big Dig": Building trades workers rerouting I-95 in Boston are part of a multiunion health and safety committee spearheaded by the laborers.

EARL DOTTER

Moretti says the unions' approach to safety has turned most of the contractors' initial fear and distrust of the unions into a good working relationship. "They know we are here to help."

When workers on a ramp site began developing rashes that wouldn't clear up, the site-

specific safety committee determined that workers needed to wear "Level-B" personal protection suits. The rashes stopped.

Early in the project, eye injuries topped the workplace injury list—some workers were not wearing eye protection, and some contractors were not issuing safety glasses or

enforcing rules requiring workers to wear them. The health and safety fund got in touch with local vendors, who provided stylish safety glasses, and union safety representatives trained workers on using them properly. Eye injuries dropped dramatically.

As a result of ongoing site walk-throughs, labor-management safety reps have identified and corrected problems involving improper use of personal protective equipment; inadequate environmental sampling and monitoring; unsafe stairways, ladders and aerial lifts; improper site illumination, electrical installation and fire safety; and inadequate fall protection and emergency response.

And to reinforce workers' awareness of proper safety practices and use of safety gear, Bianco says health and safety activists hold weekly "toolbox" safety meetings where workers discuss subjects as fundamental as good housekeeping practices—storing tools and equipment so workers don't trip, slip or fall—as well as proper lifting techniques and the necessity for protective gear. The multiunion fund has succeeded in cutting the rate of project lost-time injuries by more than half between 1994 and 1998.

While construction work remains dangerous, injury and death rates continue to fall, thanks to combined efforts of construction trades unions. Since OSHA's inception in 1970, the building trades have ensured the safety agency continues to emphasize strong inspection and enforcement on construction work. As a result, the industrywide injury and illness rate has been cut by more than half, from 19.8 per 100 workers in 1973 to 9.5 per 100 workers in 1997.

One way building trades unions have made significant health and safety inroads is through apprenticeship and journeyman programs that stress safety—specific job hazards and proper use of equipment—while informing workers about their safety rights. In addition, union representatives monitor jobsites to make sure both the employers and workers follow safe practices.

As Moretti says, while most contractors share the unions' positive approach toward safety, for those that don't, "We're going to be there every day, and we're going to continue to enforce safe practices." ■

CASE STUDY

Updating an Aging Garment Factory



When a worker at Majestic Shapes garment factory in New York City got his hand trapped in a decrepit molding press two years ago, the lack of a safety mechanism made it impossible for him to pull his hand out—or stop the machine. Helpless, he watched as the press crushed several fingers and lopped the end off his index finger.

Co-workers responded by using their collective strength to establish a powerful health and safety committee, says committee chairman Jorge Deschamps.

Until the health and safety committee formed, Majestic was much like many of New York's garment factories housed in decades-old buildings. The factory's cutting, sewing, molding and packaging machines were designed before ergonomics had become a science and regularly broke down. Ventilation was poor, and workers spent their entire shifts on a rickety collection of chairs with broken backs and wobbly legs.

Tomasina Mercado has worked at Majestic Shapes for 17 years—bending, cutting, standing and twisting her upper torso again and again to churn out dress and blouse shoulder pads. But it's the past two years that stand out in her mind.

"In the two years since we've had the [health and safety] committee, we accomplished more than the other 15 years," says Mercado, a UNITE Local 62-32 safety committee member.

Committee member Augustín Soler explains the committee's first goal was to find workers "who were not afraid to speak up and who had enough experience to be able to say what works and what doesn't." He points out that workers throughout the plant have collective bargaining rights, ensuring that workplace safety problems are addressed across the board.

"In the two years since we've had the [health and safety] committee, we accomplished more than the other 15 years."

—Tomasina Mercado, UNITE Local 62-32 safety committee member

Deschamps says the Local 62-32 committee has been effective when it meets regularly to discuss and analyze workplace problems and determine how to



Sit-down action: The UNITE health and safety committee at Majestic Shapes succeeded in getting the company to replace aging and broken-down chairs with ergonomically sound seating.



Replaced: Chairs with broken backs and wobbly legs were common at The Majestic Shapes garment factory until the UNITE health and safety committee was formed.

fix them before approaching management. The results stand out. According to committee member Melba Revis, all workers required to sit while working have new, ergonomically sound chairs. The heating system is improved, inoperative bathrooms are fixed and workers whose jobs entail standing have cushioned rubber mats to ease leg strain. Revis says in her department the sewing machines have been fitted with covers to make them safer, and dangerous machines have been removed. Much of the electrical system has been updated, and a new ventilation system sucks in all the smoke and fabric dust that once hung in the air.

And the molding press that sliced off the worker's finger now requires both hands to operate, enabling workers to keep hands out of the machine at the critical time when hundreds of pounds press down on a garment.

UNITE health and safety specialist Laurie Kellogg says the Majestic health and safety committee has had an impact beyond the plant. Deschamps and Ingrid Amparo, co-shop stewards, have completed a thorough three-month safety course and now are teaching safety rights and safe workplace practices at other UNITE shops. In January, the pair conducted a safety seminar for 600 workers at a New Jersey plant.

"After forming a committee, you really do feel more secure," Deschamps says. "The workers feel respected because they know they have a voice and the company does hear us, and they do pay attention to us." ■

CASE STUDY

Toxic Dust, Carcinogenic Fluids and Deafening Noise

The workers at General Electric's Lynn, Mass., jet engine facility, which also makes marine and industrial gears, know firsthand the dangers in making a jet engine. To bring the parts of the engine within a hundredth of a millimeter of specification perfection requires contact with chrome and nickel dust, carcinogenic metal-working fluids and their fumes and the deafening decibel levels from hundreds of drill presses and grinders.

To combat the workplace dangers, Electronic Workers Local 201 reenergized and mobilized its health and safety committee several years ago. Committee chairman

Ted Comick recalls, "We decided to aggressively seek a joint health and safety project with management. The company wants to drive down its workers' compensation costs, and we don't want to get hurt. While there have been some roller coaster aspects, we've been able to significantly reduce injuries," Comick says.

Comick is quick to point out, though, that while workers and management have some intersecting concerns, it is the union that defines the problems.

Sometimes workers were exposed to the toxic fluids that could form bacteria and fungi. They also regularly breathed toxic fumes, along with the chrome and nickel dust created by the grinding operations.

"We had lots of dermatological problems and lots of lung issues. But with a combination of pressure, confrontation and cooperation, we've gotten them to maintain and



RIC CASTILLO/UE

"The company wants to drive down its workers' compensation costs, and we don't want to get hurt."

—Ted Comick, IUE Local 201 health and safety committee chairman

monitor the whole system better, buy better equipment and improve the ventilation for all airborne hazards," Comick says.

Like many union leaders, Jeff Crosby, Local 201 president and president of the North Shore Labor Council, saw the potential for strengthening his union around health and safety issues. "We started with the belief that the health and safety work would be a union-building activity. Now we have more than 100 people involved in a network which complements the steward structure and provides a whole other avenue to develop union activists."

The committee currently is working on reducing plant noise. Comick says more than 50 percent of the 3,000 workers suffer from some hearing loss. The committee also is pressuring GE to improve its emergency response plans, since the company had reduced in-plant emergency teams

and contracted much of that work to nearby municipal agencies.

Key to creating a strong health and safety committee, Comick says, is that "the union is strongly organized internally and that the safety committee sets up its own objectives and stands up strong to management." Otherwise, he says, a committee can get swallowed up by the company.

For a health and safety program to be successful, "you've got to start with a strong union presence," Crosby explains.

"You've got to retain the right to shut down unsafe jobs, call OSHA out when you need to. Use your rights judiciously, and use whatever works to protect your members," says Comick. "But use your rights and power smartly, not needlessly." ☐

Workers Memorial Day: Organizing and Mobilizing for Safe Jobs

In the spirit of the legendary Mother Jones, tens of thousands of union and other workers will "Mourn for the Dead and Fight for the Living—Organize and Mobilize for Safe Jobs" during Workers Memorial Day observances April 28.

For decades, unions have led the struggle for improved working conditions and dignity and respect on the job. On this Workers Memorial Day, unionists will be getting out that message in actions and events across the country.

One way unionists can get members involved is by copying and distributing the petition on this page and sending it to Congress.

Workers Memorial Day kits for union activists can be ordered through the AFL-CIO's Occupational Safety and Health Department or found at www.aflcio.org/safety. The kits include a poster, fact sheet, petition, suggested events and tips on staging Workers Memorial Day activities. Call 202-637-5366. For more health and safety tools, turn to page 22.

P E T I T I O N

For decades, unions have led the struggle for improved working conditions and dignity and respect on the job. Unions have won laws and protections that have made workplaces safer and, through union contracts, have given workers a voice on the job. But the struggle is far from over.

America's workers need more protection and stronger rights. We call for:

- The right of workers to organize and, through their unions, speak out and work for safe jobs, respect and a better future.
- An end to attacks on job safety and workers' compensation laws.
- Stronger safety and health protections and fair compensation.
- Improved whistle-blower protections for workers who report job hazards and injuries.
- Coverage for all workers under the job safety law.
- An OSHA ergonomics standard to prevent repetitive strain injuries.

Mourn
for the dead
Fight
for the living
AFL-CIO
ORGANIZE AND MOBILIZE FOR SAFE JOBS

NAME	ADDRESS	CITY & STATE	ZIP CODE

ATTACH ADDITIONAL NAMES TO THIS PETITION

Mail to your congressional and state representatives, and send a copy to:

AFL-CIO Department of Occupational Safety and Health, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006



EQUAL PAY FOR

BY LAUREN LAZAROVICI

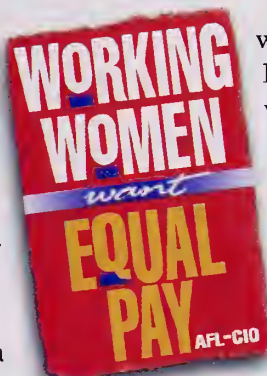
Equal pay for equal work is the law. It's bread and butter for working families. But each year, America's working families lose \$200 billion because women are not paid the same wages as men.

Those are just some of the findings of a new report released in February by the AFL-CIO and the Institute for Women's Policy Research, *Equal Pay for Working Families: National and State Data on the Pay Gap and Its Costs*.

Dana Swan, a single mother who earns about \$15,000 a year, knows firsthand the cost of the wage gap. Swan takes the bus to her job at a light-industrial plant in Milwaukee, where she works the 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift. With an extra \$148 a week—the national difference between the earnings of the average woman and the average man who work full time (that figure rises to \$193 in Wisconsin)—Swan could save up for a car. "The buses don't run that frequently at those times, especially in the snow," she says. She also could spend some of that additional money on her 10-year-old son, Joshua. Right now, she works overtime to afford school field trips and soccer team expenses—"the things that help a child to grow," she says.

"I don't want employers to take it away from men," Swan says, "but just give us equal pay."

Despite a growing economy, progress toward equal pay for



women has slowed in this decade compared with the 1980s. The study confirmed that nationally, the average woman earns \$431 a week (\$22,412 a year) compared with the \$579 weekly earnings of the average man. Minority women are hit especially hard by the lack of equal pay: They earn, on average, \$369 a week—\$210 less each week than the average man. Yet at the same time, families are depending more on women's earning to make ends meet. More than two out of three mothers in the United States work. Two-earner families are the norm. And a growing number of single mothers are supporting families on their own. That's why equal pay was described as "very important" by 94 percent of the more than 50,000 working women who answered the 1997 AFL-CIO Ask A Working Woman survey. Two out of every five respondents cited pay as the "biggest" problem women face at work, and one-third of all women and half of African American women said that despite its importance, they do not have equal pay in their jobs.

States With the Highest and Lowest Pay Gaps

On average, women are paid 74 percent of what men earn. But unequal pay varies substantially by state, with the largest pay gap in Wyoming, where women earn 63 percent of what men make.

Bottom Five States

State:	%Wage Gap
Wyoming	63
Indiana	66
Louisiana	67
North Dakota	68
Wisconsin	69

Top Five States

State:	%Wage Gap
District of Columbia	97
California	84
Florida	83
Hawaii	82
Arizona	82

The average 29-year-old woman with a college degree will lose \$986,000 over her lifetime to the pay gap. How much is the pay gap costing you? To find out, visit www.aflcio.org/women/equalpay.htm. Enter your age, education level and salary, and the interactive website will tell you how much you stand to lose to unequal pay.

WORKING FAMILIES

Unequal Pay, by the Numbers:

- Unequal pay for working women translates into \$200 billion in lost income for families every year.
- Overall, women earn just \$431 a week compared with \$579 a week for men, a wage gap of \$148.
- Women of color earn \$369 a week, a wage gap of \$210 when compared with all men.
- Unions help raise women's pay: The average union woman earns \$157 a week more than her nonunion counterpart.

Single copies of *Equal Pay for Working Families: National and State Data on the Pay Gap and Its Costs* are \$12: AFL-CIO, Support Services Dept., 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, 202-637-5042.

In 1979, a woman earned 63 cents each week for every dollar a man earned. The wage gap has narrowed since then: Today, a woman earns 74 cents for every dollar a man earns. Unfortunately, most of that "progress" is due to the decline in men's wages, not to an increase in women's wages. Some of the pay gap is caused by women's different levels of education and experience. But between one-quarter and one-half of the disparity cannot be explained by those factors, and many economists believe that some of the unexplained portion is due to discrimination.

Unequal pay robs women and their families of economic security and causes a downward spiral, doubling family poverty rates and preventing women from saving enough money for retirement. With equal pay, millions of working women could earn enough money to meet basic needs and pull their families out of poverty:

- Single working mothers would earn \$4,459 more a year, cutting their poverty rate in half, from 25.3 percent to 12.6 percent.
- Married women would earn \$4,205 more a year, and poverty among their families would fall from 2.1 percent to 0.8 percent.
- Single working women who live alone would earn an average of \$4,151 more a year, and the poverty rate for these women would drop from 6.3 percent to 1 percent.

The new report also shows that union membership is key to decreasing the pay gap. Union women earn \$568 a week for every \$679 a week a union man earns. That's fully one-third better than nonunion women, who earn \$411 a week.

Equal Pay, State by State

Working with community and women's groups, union activists plan to introduce equal pay legislation in as many as 24 state capitals this year. The nationwide grassroots effort will augment union support for the federal Paycheck Fairness Act, which strengthens existing equal pay laws, and the Fair Pay Act, which expands equal pay to work of equal value.

The AFL-CIO has developed model equal pay legislation that state leaders can use or modify to fit their needs. It would prohibit employers from using race- and gender-biased pay scales for workers in equivalent jobs and protect workers who fight for equal pay from being fired or harassed. Some states where unions are pushing equal pay bills include:

- Indiana, where the state House recently passed a bill that would prohibit pay discrimination based on several factors, including gender. "People are realizing that something has to be done," says Jerry Payne, the state federation's secretary-treasurer.
- Michigan, where a proposal would amend the state's civil rights act to make gender-based wage discrimination a violation of the law. The bill passed the state House last year.
- Illinois, where a new law would require equal pay for equivalent jobs, state-level penalties for violators, outreach and education and a pay disparity study by the state's Labor Department. "This is a good issue to mobilize our members around," says Catherine Shannon, the state federation's political director.

For a free copy of model Equal Pay legislation, call the Working Women's Department toll-free at 888-971-9797. ☐

Unions make the difference because they bring the wage setting process into the open, ensuring that employers rely on objective factors such as skill, effort and responsibility when setting pay rates. Unions make it more difficult for employers to discriminate and help ensure a stronger voice for all workers. Unions organize, bargain and lobby for pay equity and for family-friendly policies that help working families. A national commitment to equal pay for women and people of color and to protecting workers' right to organize, the report finds, would go a long way toward eliminating inequality and closing the wage gap that imperils economic security for millions of working families. ☐

RON CHAPPLE/FPG



ASK A WORKING WOMAN...

WE ASKED WORKING WOMEN in 1997 what they cared about most. More than 50,000 working women in every kind of job responded with a clear message.

You told us:

Your families depend on you. Nearly two-thirds of working women report that they provide half or more of their household income.

It's high time you got equal pay and basic benefits. Nearly every woman thinks equal pay is important—and so do most men. Many are concerned about low pay on the one hand, the “glass ceiling” on the other and all kinds of pay and benefits problems in between.

Time is in short supply! You're working more hours than ever before. But just when you need time, paid benefits such as sick leave, vacation and paid family leave are harder to come by. You are juggling your work and your family—most of you have children at home or elderly relatives you are responsible for, but not even one in 10 of you has a job that provides help for child care or elder care.

...Distribute the new survey on page 18 to every woman who wants to make changes on the job.

We got down to work—

In unions, women's and civil rights organizations, community and religious-based groups we got to work—to take on some of the biggest issues.

Equal pay. We are introducing strong legislation in 20 states to expand equal pay laws.

Retirement. We're working to make sure Social Security is there for all of us when we need it, and that it doesn't become a “winners and losers” gamble.

Child care, after-school care and schools. We won more money for after-school programs, for more school teachers and for basic child care services, but it's not nearly enough for quality care parents can depend on.

Health care. We have lots more to do to win affordable, quality health care for all.

Now it's time to gather together in lunchrooms and living rooms, kitchens and conferences to talk about what matters the most to working women and your hopes for 2000 and beyond.

Your concerns will become the mandate when thousands of working women meet in Chicago on March 11–12, 2000, at **WORKING WOMEN CONFERENCE 2000**. No matter where you work, whether you're a union member or not, just starting out or facing retirement, striving to get ahead or simply struggling to get by, you belong at Working Women Conference 2000. Fill out the form at the bottom of the survey to get more information or call the AFL-CIO Working Women's Dept. toll-free at 1-888-971-9797.

**WORKING
WOMEN
CONFERENCE
2000**

**IF YOU'RE
A WOMAN** in
America today,
chances are 99 in
100 that you will
spend at least
part of your life
working for pay.

But the
chances aren't
as good that you'll
be heard when
it comes to
**REALLY SOLVING
PROBLEMS**
working women
face every day—
the long hours or
second job that
pays the bills but
keeps you away
from your family;
the hard work and
high skills that
still don't add up
to a good salary;
the job you give a
lot to but don't
get enough back
from.

**WE'VE GOT A
CHANCE** to make
our voices heard
on the things
that really matter
to us.

ASK A WORKING WOMAN SURVEY

Discuss the questions below in a group if you can—whether it is two of you over coffee or 2,000 at a conference—or answer it on your own. Everyone should fill in her own form and send it in an envelope to *Ask A Working Woman*, AFL-CIO, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

Your concerns will be added to those of thousands of other working women and will set the priorities for change in workplaces and in laws. We'll present the findings at **WORKING WOMEN CONFERENCE 2000** in Chicago, March 11–12, 2000.

ALL SURVEY RESPONSES ARE KEPT COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL.

1. If you could make changes on the job, what would be your highest priorities? CHECK THREE.

- ☐ Child care and after-school care
- ☐ Elder care
- ☐ Equal pay
- ☐ Higher pay/promotions
- ☐ More control over work hours
(shift work, overtime, truly flexible schedules)
- ☐ Respect on the job
- ☐ Safe work environment
- ☐ Retirement security
- ☐ Health insurance
- ☐ Fair pay and benefits for part-time, temporary and contract workers
- ☐ Job security
- ☐ Stronger programs to end discrimination and sexual harassment
- ☐ Career development and training

2. Indicate your top TWO choices for laws that would most improve your life as a working woman.

- ☐ Stronger equal pay/pay equity laws
- ☐ Laws to improve the quality and affordability of child care and after-school care
- ☐ Laws to improve the quality and affordability of health care
- ☐ Laws to strengthen pensions and Social Security to make retirement more secure
- ☐ Laws to expand Family and Medical Leave and to provide for paid leave
- ☐ Laws to ensure that workers who are in part-time, temporary or contract jobs are treated fairly when it comes to pay and benefits
- ☐ Stronger affirmative action laws to provide more opportunities for all women
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

3. Do you think an organization for working women could help you achieve some of these goals?

☐ Yes ☐ No

What are the qualities or characteristics you want in an organization? (For example, listens to your concerns; enough clout to get the job done.) _____

4. We will elect a new President of the United States in 2000. If you could tell him or her one thing about what it's like to be a working woman, what would you say?

5. We'd like to know a little about you. This will help us know that we are reaching a wide variety of working women. All of this information is confidential.

Age _____ Occupation _____

Do you work ☐ Part-time or ☐ Full-time?

Do you work more than one job? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you have children under 18? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how many? _____

Are you caring for an elderly or disabled adult?

☐ Yes ☐ No

What is your yearly income? _____

Marital status: ☐ Married ☐ Unmarried with partner

☐ Single, widowed, divorced

What is your race/ethnicity? _____

Are you a member of a union? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, _____ Union _____ Local _____

What other organizations, if any, are you a member of? _____

YES! I want to get the results of this survey and would like more information about **Working Women Conference 2000**

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____ Organization/Union _____ Local _____

Street Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____ E-mail _____

Faculty@work for Working Families

When graduate teaching assistants struck all eight University of California campuses in December to win recognition of their union, the UAW, UC faculty members were among their staunchest supporters. Just weeks before, the American Association of University Professors voted to support the right of student employees to organize and bargain collectively, joining the American Federation of Teachers, which has organized more than 7,000 graduate assistants since the mid 1970s.

This growing cooperation between unions and academics has tremendous potential to raise the voice of workers on college campuses across the country.

"Faculty, staff and students are playing a unique role in the new American labor movement through the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute, Union Summer, labor teach-ins around the country and through the resurgence of critical dialogue between progressive intellectuals and union leaders," says Kent Wong, president of the University and College Labor Education Association.

A new resource guide by the AFL-CIO, *Faculty@work: Inspiring Activism and Supporting Working Families*, provides tools to help faculty members bring the union message into the classroom and to inspire students to join the movement. The guide explains how faculty members can become involved in restoring workers' right to organize, moving students to action and supporting working families.

1. Supporting organizing

"Graduate student instructors at many universities teach such a heavy load that they become underpaid instructors rather than students learning to teach," says Perry Robinson, deputy director of the AFT higher-education department. "They need representation because they're on the bottom tier of what has become a two-tier profession."

When workers expose employers' legal

tricks and scare tactics and gain significant community support for their efforts, they can boost the momentum of organizing drives and limit the negative impact of anti-worker efforts.

Academics, whose expertise is generally well-respected in the community, can play important roles in exposing employers' anti-union tactics by speaking out in local forums and writing opinion pieces and articles that publicize employers' secret war against workers.

Faculty members and students can use their research skills to form fact-finding delegations and hold hearings to study employer conduct. They also can join community alliances that support workers' right to organize.

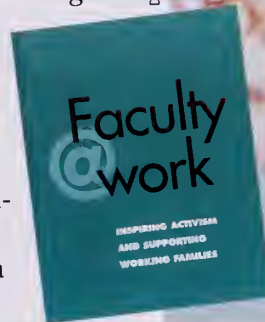
2. Moving students to action

As *Faculty@work* notes, a growing number of students are becoming active in union issues. After gaining a new appreciation for the plight of workers through the AFL-CIO Union Summer program, some of the nearly 2,000 interns have returned to campus and formed Student Labor Action Coalitions to help fight for worker issues. On campuses around the country, students have organized in support of local union organizing campaigns, against sweatshop labor and in solidarity with workers on their own campuses. At Duke University, students and faculty wrote a model code of conduct for manufacturers of school logo products, outlawing sweatshop production. In New Haven, hotel workers, backed by faculty and students at Yale University, were able to organize the Omni Hotel.

Faculty members can play a pivotal role in developing this activist spirit in students. Faculty mentors can help students avoid common pitfalls. They can teach students the connection between unions and solutions to social problems that concern them.

Faculty members may also be able to provide a bridge for students with the local labor

DAVID BACON



By the book: Faculty support of a graduate student walkout at the University of California is one example of the emerging alliance between unions and academics.

movement by providing information on local labor struggles. Some have moved the classroom off campus, encouraging students to join local campaigns or using field trips for a firsthand look at working conditions.

3. Supporting working families

Corporate America hires a slew of academic experts to promote its views, influence public opinion and shape the dialogue on public issues. Workers need the same kind of intellectual firepower to support their causes. By speaking out on worker issues in the media, writing articles or giving interviews, activist faculty members can reshape the way the public views working family issues. Faculty members also can help develop strategies and ideas by joining with think tanks to produce papers on issues that concern working people, such as the use of tax abatements to aid corporate expansion.

Faculty members should challenge their students to "make the very best and very fullest use of everything they've learned in school and put it to work for America's future," says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson.

Many students are becoming involved with labor issues through the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute and Union Summer. For information on both programs, call 800-848-3021.

To order copies of *Faculty@work: Inspiring Activism and Supporting Working Families*, call 202-637-5042. @

—James B. Parks

HEART OF THE MOVEMENT

Organizing Union Member to Member

"Get out there and talk to the people. Be positive. Give all the information you have. Have a smiling face. That's what you need."

Tony Padilla had watched his father come to the aid of working families as a union activist, and he wanted to do the same thing.

"I first learned about the importance of unions from my father," says Padilla, chief steward for AFSCME Local 127 in San Diego. "He was a shop steward for his union, the Machinists, at Solar Industries in San Diego, which makes turbines for electrical power plants. The influence of my father and unions played an important part in my life. I applied for and received a job at Solar because I believed in the good fight. My father's efforts and dedication to the unions led to one such fight, which became known as the Solar Seven. It occurred 18 years ago. Seven employees attempted to take Good Friday off. They were fired because they wanted to observe Good Friday, and the company said, 'No way.' My father got all seven people their jobs back and eight months of back pay. They felt they were right."

"I was so impressed by my father's efforts that I wanted to bring his experience, as well as mine, to another area of San Diego, which led me to the city of San Diego, where I joined AFSCME Local 127." He ran for the executive board of his local and was appointed steward at his jobsite, representing water utility workers. Then the new president made him chief shop steward. "I did organizing, talking to our employees, letting them know about the advantages of being a union member, such as benefits" Padilla says, "and letting them know they had a voice in their union." Last year, he was elected vice president of AFSCME Local 127 and is on its executive board. He spends three days a week going to some of the 100 yards the local represents, meeting with the union members. "I like talking to people out there," he says. "My big high is talking to nonmembers and convincing them to join and showing how that will make us all stronger."

Padilla recruits an average of two or three members a month. With open shop rules for San Diego public employees, unions are constantly signing up new members. Sometimes things go better than expected, like the time Padilla recruited 11 maintenance workers in one shot at Qualcomm Stadium, home of the Padres and Chargers.

"That was my most satisfying organizing experience," he says. "We did a presentation in English and in Spanish—I speak Spanish—and we got a real good response. It was a real eye-opener



"My big high is talking to nonmembers and convincing them to join and showing how that will make us all stronger."

Tony Padilla (right), AFSCME Local 127

for me. It worked because we hit a little harder, and we translated more."

Being responsive to potential new members is a key to organizing success, Padilla says. "Most of the workers at the stadium are part-time, and they wanted us to negotiate benefits for them. We talked about everything from uniforms to safety shoes to lockers. I got them shoes and lockers—some people had been there as long as six years [without those things]. We now have scaled back dues for part-timers," he says.

Member-to-member contact is another key. "I encourage members to talk to their co-workers," Padilla says. "Very seldom do I run across someone who doesn't want to hear about the union. My advice to other members who want to organize is: Get out there and talk to the people. Be positive. Give all the information you have. Have a smiling face. That's what you need."

Padilla is a perfectionist. "We have 1,100 members [but] we represent 2,400 people," he says. "We're working to get 100 percent. We want to hit that magic number."

—Laureen Lazarovici

Heart of the Movement is an occasional feature that profiles union member-organizers and activists. If you know a union member working to ensure that working families have a voice, contact America@work. Phone: 202-637-5010; e-mail: atwork@afscio.org.

A Riveting Experience

The most popular female icon of World War II, Rosie the Riveter, is featured on a new 33-cent stamp offered by the U.S. Postal Service, part of its Celebrate the Century commemorative collection.

The government-created character, Rosie, was inspired by the late Rose Will Monroe, an aircraft riveter, who appeared on posters and in films encouraging women to join the war effort. The Rosie campaign resulted in a 57 percent increase

in women in the workforce over four years. More than 300,000 women took defense industry jobs, where they generally worked 48 hours a week. Several hundred thousand more women volunteered for the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, taking over noncombat jobs to "free a man to fight."

Unions worked through the federal War Labor Board to insist that the government and contractors provide the women equal pay for equal work. @

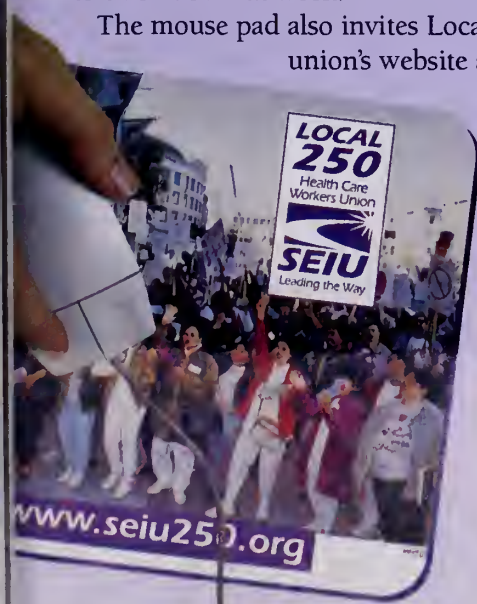


Mighty Mouse Pad

Seeing to communicate rapidly with their 45,000 members, SEIU Local 250 union leaders are building an electronic network connecting Local 250 members throughout the San Francisco Bay area. To bolster participation, the union sends members who submit an e-mail address a free mouse pad designed with a photo of union members and the Local 250 logo.

Local 250 President Sal Rosselli says the idea grew out of staff brainstorming sessions on how best to serve a diverse membership—nurses, hospital and home care workers, physicians, clerical workers and paramedics. "We have to be able to communicate with our members when they're not in the office," Rosselli says. "We wanted a way to reach out to them because they often are difficult to track down at work."

The mouse pad also invites Local 250 members to visit the union's website at www.seiu250.org. @



Civics lesson: Iris Villaneda, Daisy Villaneda, Vicky Benítez and José Montoya are among 175 Sunnyside High School students suspended for protesting a Washington State initiative repealing affirmative action for minorities and women.



ERIK NOEL NELSEN/UFW

SUSPENDED IN ACTION

After Washington State voters passed an initiative repealing affirmative action for minorities and women in November, students at the mostly Latino Sunnyside High School in southern Washington decided to protest. Nearly 250 students marched a half mile to the Farm Workers' regional office in downtown Sunnyside, where some of them had volunteered in the campaign against the initiative. On returning to school, the 175 students whose teachers had reported their absence were suspended for three days.

"We did it to show we didn't have any say in it and because we know it will hurt us," says senior José Montoya. Already, the University of Washington has dropped affirmative action requirements from its selection process.

The students' parents, some of whom are UFW members employed at the Chateau St. Michelle vineyards, asked the

school principal to cancel the suspensions. When he refused, they called UFW regional director Guadalupe Gamboa for help. Gamboa joined more than 100 parents and students in a meeting with school officials. The school decreased the suspensions by one day but refused to remove them from the students' records.

By contrast, a similar student protest at a Skagit County, Wash., high school resulted in detention, a far less harsh punishment, for about 150 students. Teachers there led discussions on civic responsibilities.

Sunnyside High School's handling of the matter has caused parents to form a committee, Parents of Students United for Their Rights, that aims to improve conditions at the school. The group may file legal actions against the Sunnyside School District, according to UFW attorney Blanca Rodriguez. @

UNION LINE

CLEAN UP THE UNION WAY

Replacing major kitchen appliances? You'll find the union label on these products.

Garbage disposals—Sinkmaster by Anaheim Manufacturing Co. (IBT); Tappan by WCI Range Division of AB Electrolux (Steelworkers); Waste King by Thermador Waste King (IBEW Boilermakers); Dishwasher—Amana Collection Modern Line

by Amana Refrigeration Inc. (IAM); GE, Hotpoint, Pencrest by General Electric Co. (IBEW IUOE SMW IBT IAM); Waste King by Thermador Waste King (IBEW Boilermakers); Tappan by WCI Range Division of AB Electrolux (Steelworkers);

Organizing Around

SAFETY AND HEALTH

Organizers can galvanize worker support around safety and health and mobilize in-plant committee members to collect information about an employer's job safety record. Listed here are tools organizers can use to make the connection between workplace safety and health and the collective power of union action.

TO REQUEST YOUR EMPLOYER'S OSHA INJURY AND ILLNESS RECORDS

SAMPLE LETTER

Date

[Plant Manager]
[Company Name]
[Company Address]

RE: OSHA 200 Forms

Dear [Plant Manager]
As [an employee or a former employee] of [name of plant], and pursuant to Federal OSHA Regulation 29 CFR 1904.7, I hereby request that a copy of the log and summary of recordable occupational injuries and illnesses, OSHA Form 200, for the years [fill in, up to five years back] be made available to [your name] within 15 days from the date of this request. The log and summary for the entire establishment are requested.

Sincerely,

[NAME]
[ADDRESS]

ORGANIZERS' CHECKLIST

For Safety and Health

- ✓ Survey workers to identify job hazards and develop an action list.
- ✓ Set up an in-plant safety and health committee among activists.
- ✓ Research past OSHA activity at the workplace through OSHA's website, www.osha.gov. Click on "Statistics and Inspection Data," then click on "Establishment Search" and type in the company's name.
- ✓ To analyze worksite injuries and illnesses, ask workers to request the OSHA Form 200 log from the employer (see sample letter).
- ✓ Urge workers to request a list of hazardous chemicals used at the workplace, exposure measurements, Material Safety Data Sheets and a copy of the Hazard Communication Program.
- ✓ Determine a company's pollution output by going to the Environmental Defense Fund's "Scorecard" website at www.scorecard.org. Click on "Pollution Indicator," scroll down to "Facility Reports" and type in the company name.
- ✓ Educate workers in asserting their rights by filing hazard complaints, wearing buttons and asking for an OSHA inspection. Go to the AFL-CIO website, click on "Safety and Health" and click on "Information You Can Use" to help find safety and health resources.

FIND IT FAST

Safety and Health Websites for Organizers

- | | |
|---|---|
| AFL-CIO— www.aflcio.org
Information on workplace hazards and worker safety and health rights. | Environmental Protection Agency— www.epa.gov
Environmental regulations covering employers. |
| Occupational Safety and Health Administration— www.osha.gov
OSHA standards and information on workplace inspections. | Bureau of Labor Statistics— stats.bls.gov/oshhome.htm
Statistics on the hazards in specific industries. |
| Mine Safety and Health Administration— www.msha.gov
Safety standards covering mining. | Material Safety Data Sheets— www.ilpi.com/msds/index.htm
Information on workplace chemical hazards. |
| National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health— www.cdc.gov/niosh
Latest research on workplace hazards. | Environmental Defense Fund's Chemical "Scorecard"— www.scorecard.org
Determine how much pollution your workplace releases into the community. ☞ |

PUBLICATIONS

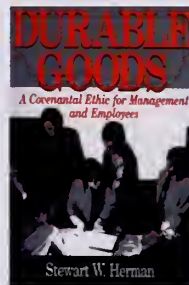
The Quiet Sickness: A Photographic Chronicle of Hazardous Work in America

brings together 150 black-and-white photographs by award-winning photojournalist Earl Dotter in a graphic portrayal of the dangers workers face on the job.

Dotter, who took his camera to the Appalachian coal fields 25 years ago as a VISTA volunteer, has photographed a variety of workers from miners in West Virginia to window washers strapped to the Empire State Building 86 stories above New York City. Throughout his career, Dotter has emphasized the workplace dangers that men and women face daily on the job. The book also devotes two

sections to workplace activism and job satisfaction. Dotter's photography is featured on the cover of this issue of *America@work*. \$48 from AIHA Press, 703-849-8888.

Durable Goods: A Covenantal Ethic for Management and Employees, by Stewart W. Herman, makes the case for a labor-management "covenant" based on existing relationships. Herman, an assistant professor of religion and liberal arts at Concordia College in Minnesota, provides an academic treatment that can serve as a guide for discerning the limits of cooperation in employment relations. Appropri-



ate for union leaders and professors of business and religious ethics. \$20 paperback, \$40 cloth. University of Notre Dame Press.

The World's Strongest Trade Unions: The Scandinavian Labor Movement, by Walter Galenson, examines the successes of the labor movements in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, where up to 90 percent of workers are unionized. Galenson stresses the success of Scandinavian unions in organizing white-collar workers, recruiting women and adapting to changing economic forces as a model for union movements in other countries seeking to reverse membership decline. \$55. Quorum Books, Greenwood Publishing Group. To order, call 800-225-5800. @

CONFERENCES

FORGING LABOR'S FUTURE

Building labor-community alliances and organizing opportunities in the South are the key topics for the annual Labor Educators Conference April 8-11 at the Hyatt Regency in Atlanta.

Forging a Labor-Community Agenda: Race, Class and Gender and the Fight for Economic Justice is open to activists and staff involved in labor education, staff training and leadership development. The conference is jointly sponsored by the AFL-CIO Education Department and the University and College Labor Education Association. The cost for UCLEA and AFL-CIO-affiliated members is \$150; for nonmembers, \$175; and the one-day fee is \$75. Make checks payable to the AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer and mail to: Conference Registration, AFL-CIO Education Department—Attention: Nina Davis, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

For more information or a conference registration form, call Davis at 202-637-5141.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Four regional Community Services conferences will focus on integrating the work of Community Services' staff and volunteers with the AFL-CIO Union Cities initiative. Sponsored by the AFL-CIO Field Mobilization Department's Community Action program, the meetings will examine organ-

izing, grassroots legislative activities, mobilization and the Common Sense Economics program. The conferences are scheduled for the Northeast, March 21-23 in Hershey, Pa.; Midwest, April 6-9 in Black Lake, Mich.; West, April 25-27 in Los Angeles; and South, June 3-5 in Orlando, Fla. For more information, contact Chris Marston at 202-637-5191.

UNION CITIES

Four regional conferences for AFL-CIO central labor councils will focus on broad-

ening CLC's support for affiliate organizing. Participants will discuss right-to-organize issues, examine how they can incorporate Union Cities' strategic planning and leadership skills into their efforts and attend workshops on organizing, politics, coalition building, mobilization, affiliate support and strategic planning. Sponsored by the AFL-CIO Field Mobilization Department, the conferences are scheduled for June 4-6 in St. Louis, Atlanta and Cherry Hills, N.J. For more information, call Scott Reynolds at 202-627-5226. @

EXHIBITS

Every Worker an Organizer

A photo exhibit documenting the organizing efforts of the Farm Workers throughout the 1990s is on display at the George Meany Memorial Archives in Silver Spring, Md., through May 28. The 41 black-and-white photos in the exhibit, *Every Worker an Organizer: Photographs by David Bacon*, chronicle major events in UFW history since the death of César Chávez in 1993.

Focusing on the working and living conditions of farm laborers, Bacon took many of the images during the current organizing drive among California's strawberry workers. Bacon, a factory worker and union organizer for 20 years, now visually documents labor, immigration and the impact of the global economy.

Exhibit hours are Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., except for holidays. For more information and directions, call 301-431-5451. @



Hands of time: One of the photos from the *Every Worker an Organizer* exhibit at the George Meany Center depicts the hands of Juan Jiménez of El Hoyo, Calif., who picked lemons for many years.

The Top 10 Reasons to Strengthen Social Security and Reject Privatization

Strengthen
**SOCIAL
SECURITY**
for Working
Families
Today's Unions
at the

You probably won't win the lottery before you retire.

There's no guarantee you'll hit a stock market jackpot, either.

Even if you do, it might not last as long as you do.

And without cost-of-living increases it might not be worth much when you really need it.

Women and people of color lose enough to unequal pay during their working years. Social Security helps level the field for them in retirement.

Your kids sleep better knowing that when you retire, you can afford independence.

You sleep better knowing that if something happens to you tomorrow, your family's protected.

It's better to have retirement money in **your** pocket than in a Wall Street money manager's pocket.

After a lifetime of hard work, every retiree deserves dignity, security and freedom from poverty.

No one should **have** to work 'til 70.

Call Congress toll-free at
1-877-722-7494

For more information about the AFL-CIO's campaign to strengthen Social Security for working families, call toll-free **1-877-760-2340** or visit www.aflcio.org/socialsecurity

Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

APRIL 1999

America @work

GOOD JOBS AND STRONG COMMUNITIES

MAKING THE CONNECTION

ALSO INSIDE:

*Bringing Home
Global Human Rights*

*Retired and
Ready to Go*

IDEAS AND VIEWS FROM YOU

"I HAVE REALLY ENJOYED YOUR PUBLICATION over the last years—using information for flyers and meetings and educating myself about issues and problems....There was a question [in the February Q&A section] concerning 60-day notice for plant closings....Last October 20, the [Louis Allis] Co. filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy and gave us 15 minutes' notice at the end of our shift....The law is there, it was violated, but the end result might be a big zero. I write this to caution you and anyone else not to think that closings like this can't happen anymore."

—Lee Gierke, president, IUE Local 1131, Milwaukee

Say What?

How does your union involve retiree members in organizing, political work or community action?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue.

America@work

815 16th St., N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20006

Phone: 202-637-5010

Fax: 202-508-6908

e-mail: atwork@afcio.org

Here's What You Say

ABOUT THE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACTIONS YOUR UNION IS PLANNING FOR WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY:

"IAM [Local Lodge] 1725 is day-sponsoring at WFAE [radio station] in Charlotte, N.C., eight 15-second spots reminding people about Workers Memorial Day and the number of people who die on the job each year."—Sanford Tanenbaum

"THE NEW MEXICO FEDERATION of Labor...turned the title 'paycheck protection' into the positive, pro-worker, pro-labor term it should be....This paycheck protection would change termination procedures in New Mexico from a firing-at-will to reasonable cause. Other elements in the [state] legislation include [putting] the burden of proof...on the employer....This legislation has set the business community on its ear! Various business journals have claimed that our legislation is 'the worst nightmare for the business community.'"—Mike Shea, political director, New Mexico AFL-CIO

"YOUR RECENT ARTICLE, 'The Corporate Agenda,' was right on the mark. In Connecticut, we helped form a labor-community-religion coalition called Citizens for Economic Opportunity (CEO) to hold corporations accountable and to promote stable jobs and sensible economic development policies for our communities. Our activities have included bringing suit against insurance company mergers and advocating...a bill that would reserve economic assistance only for companies that treat their workers fairly and obey the law. Working together, we intend to make sure companies take the high road."—John W. Olsen, president, Connecticut AFL-CIO

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in America@work.

When you see
unions@work
and our
members@work
and collective power
in our
communities@work,
that's when you see

America@work

"THE JANUARY ISSUE of America@work is great! It really invites you to read it, is chock full of interesting stories (I particularly liked the Nike Economy/Corporate Agenda piece) and highlights organizing victories. I have one suggestion, however. If labor is going to assume its rightful place in American politics, then it will be important to build coalitions and acknowledge coalition allies.... On page 15 you tout a union-community coalition [without identifying member organizations]....I know I don't need to tell you that acknowledging your allies keeps them coming back and building a broader movement for social and economic justice in our country (and around the globe, for that matter). Keep up the good work."—Jim Fleischmann

America@work

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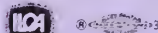
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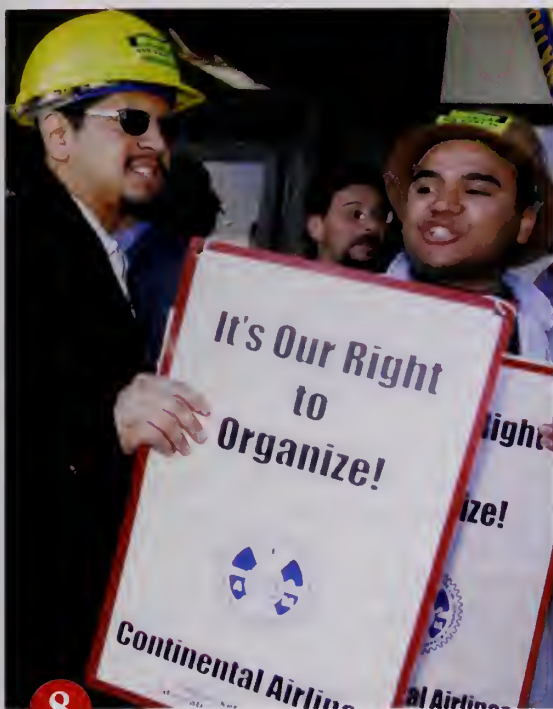
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8

8

WITH THE COMMUNITY BEHIND US, WE CAN'T LOSE

How union-community coalitions are showing that good jobs make strong communities

8



12

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SECURITY FOR WOMEN

Because women live longer than men, spend less time working, are paid less than men and are more likely to be widowed, protecting Social Security for women is especially vital

14

RETIRED AND READY TO GO

Unions are reaching out to their most experienced members for organizing, political action and community mobilization

18

BRINGING HOME GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS

Fifty years after the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, unionists are renewing their campaign to make employers aware of the connection between living wages, safe workplaces, the right to join unions and strong communities

4 CURRENTS

Pennsylvania unionists urge lawmakers to strengthen Social Security

Teamsters launch safe highways campaign

NALC holds national food drive

21 LIKE IT IS

Stand up and be counted in the 2000 census

22 OUT THERE

Going for the green

Making waves at Avondale

Adopt a gas station

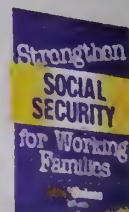
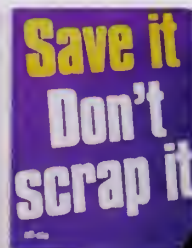
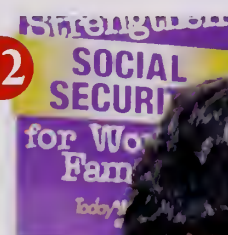
23 HOMEPAGE

The Union Difference discounted for America@work readers!

The PBS Livelyhood series on video

Organize, original labor songs with a rock 'n' roll beat

12



UNSAFE at Any Speed

January 1, 2000, will mark the first day that potentially unsafe Mexican trucks driven by untrained, unlicensed, low-wage drivers are scheduled to gain access to U.S. roads as part of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The Teamsters have launched a campaign, backed by the AFL-CIO Executive Council, to

educate the public about the trucks' dangers and urge President Clinton and Congress to keep the unsafe vehicles out of the country.

Mexican trucks already have been allowed into "commercial zones" along the U.S.-Mexico border. A recent U.S. Department of Transportation study shows that in 1997, 44 percent of the Mexican trucks inspected after they crossed the border were taken out of service because of serious safety violations—and fewer than 1 percent can be inspected because there aren't enough state or federal inspectors at border-crossing stations.

Many Mexican drivers earn about \$7 a day, and Mexico does not regulate the

number of hours they spend behind the wheel—in contrast to U.S. rules that require drivers to rest after 10 hours. Another concern the Teamsters raise is that the trucks' cargo could include uninspected food, such as the berries that caused a hepatitis outbreak among schoolchildren two years ago, and possibly even drugs, according to U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration officials.

"The rhetoric of free trade must give way to the harsh reality that lives are at stake," says IBT President James Hoffa in a newspaper column distributed nationally in March. ☐

High road action: Teamsters protest NAFTA laws that will bring unregulated Mexican trucks to U.S. highways.



TEAMSTERS

Flying High



Flying high: Flight attendants called off a planned C.H.A.O.S. ("Create Havoc Around Our System") strike at America West Airlines March 20 after winning a tentative contract agreement. It is the first union contract for the 2,300 workers, who voted to join the Association of Flight Attendants in 1994. In 1991, the flight attendants were forced to take a 10 percent pay cut to help the then financially-struggling carrier. Although America West's profits have since skyrocketed, until the tentative accord, the airline refused to compensate the flight attendants for their lost stock and wages. Worker support for AFA's negotiating committee was a major factor in the victory as flight attendants voted 99.1 percent approval for a strike, if necessary.

New York Hosts Work and Family Summits

Kicking off a series of strategy sessions across the state, the New York State AFL-CIO hosted its first-ever Work and Family Summit March 4, with more than 200 union activists tackling working families' concerns about child and elder care, paid family leave and equal pay.

"We need to fight harder at the bargaining table for employer-provided work and family benefits, convince our legislators that government also has a responsibility and reach into our communities to establish the services our members need," says Ed Cleary, outgoing president of the New York State AFL-CIO. As part of its outreach efforts, the state federation is mailing a survey on work and family life to union members. Nationwide, the AFL-CIO Working

Women's Department also is distributing the Ask A Working Woman questionnaire. New York unionists are spearheading efforts to have New York join 24 states in which equal pay legislation is being introduced (See America@work, March 1999).

Union work and family successes include the New York City Central Labor Council's efforts to help unions bargain contracts that include contributions to a multiunion child care fund, the UAW's labor-management fund for child and elder care and the child and elder care fund of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 2 in San Francisco.

To distribute copies of the Ask A Working Woman survey, photocopy it from the March America@work or call the Working Women's Department toll-free at 888-971-9797. ☐

No Aloha for ABC

Chanting "ABC, No Aloha, Work for Free, ABC, Go Home," some 350 building and construction trades members turned out with their families and other supporters on the Hawaiian island of Maui to picket the national convention of the anti-union Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC). "Without the unions, bosses can do whatever they want, just like the old days," says Raymond Shibata, an IBEW Local 1186 member. ☐

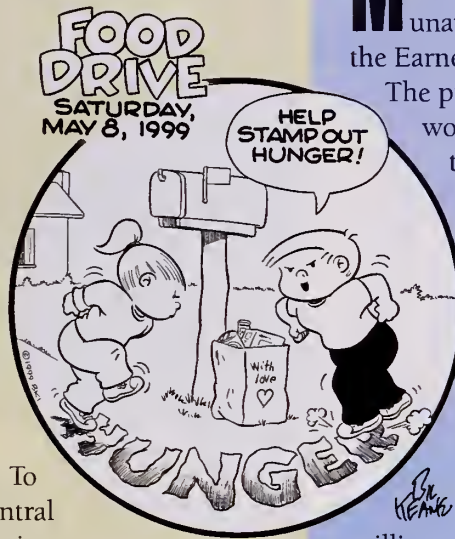


HAWAII CARPENTERS UNION

NALC National Food Drive

In more than 10,000 communities, the Letter Carriers will be collecting millions of pounds of food in the nation's largest one-day food drive May 8. Last year, more than 300,000 Letter Carriers picked up 62 million pounds of food along their routes and transported it to central collection sites for distribution to food banks and homeless shelters.

The seventh annual NALC National Food Drive is sponsored jointly with the United Way, the U.S. Postal Service and the AFL-CIO. The USPS Expedited/Package Services Division is sending 100 million color postcards to households across the nation urging their participation. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney is asking union members to donate and to volunteer in assisting NALC branches in collecting, sorting and delivering the food. To take part, call your local NALC branch, central labor council or AFL-CIO Community Services Coordinator Chris Marston at 202-637-5191. ☐



UAW Drives Home VICTORIES

Some 1,700 graduate assistants at the University of California—Los Angeles voted by 718 to 269 to join the Student Association of Graduate Student Employees/UAW in March 9–11 elections. The victory comes after the UCLA graduate students' 15-year struggle for recognition. More than 9,000 assistants at

all eight University of California campuses walked out for a week in December to dramatize the need for a union.

The UCLA victory is one of nearly one dozen UAW wins in February and March, including a card-check victory among 941 workers at the Lear Industries in Strasburg, Va.—a victory that makes Lear an all union company.

The Strasburg plant, which produces interior trim for vehicles, is one of several formerly owned by Automotive Industries, a company fiercely hostile to efforts by employees to organize and bargain collectively.

Other wins include 527 workers at TECMAR, a Michigan-based supplier to General Motors, and 961 workers at South Charleston Stamping in Charleston, W.Va. ☐

Unity

Jeter (Steelworkers Local 6996), Debbie (UAW Local 807) and Paul Wiley (Machinists Local 837) prepare for congressional visits on Capitol Hill. The three joined more than 3,400 local unionists in February for the three-day joint Unified Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.



RICK REINHARD

Earned Income Credit: Get the Word Out

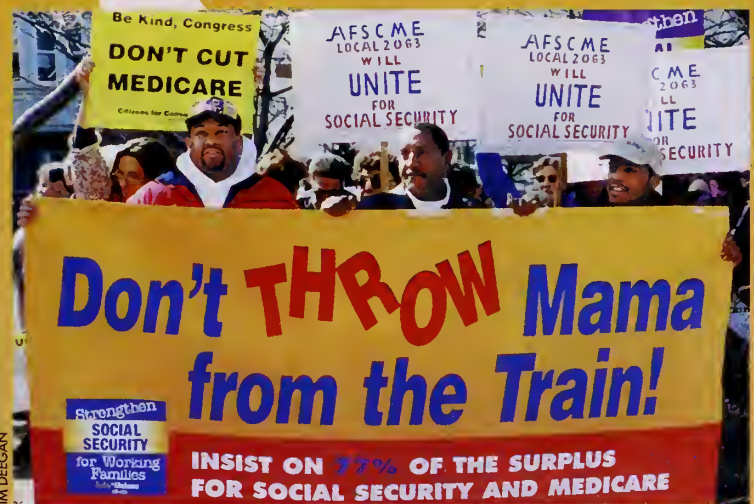
Many workers struggling to make ends meet are unaware they qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit. The program lifts more workers out of poverty than any other federal program, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Last year, the EITC helped boost incomes of 19 million low-wage workers and their families, with families receiving up to \$3,756—but millions more were eligible.

To get the word out to qualified families, the center launched the 1999 Earned Income Credit Campaign, pro-

viding social services departments, job-training programs, employers and other organizations with materials to inform workers about the EITC. The campaign encourages referrals to appropriate government agencies and, where available, free volunteer assistance for workers preparing income tax returns. Among those who stand to benefit are workers moving from welfare to work and immigrant workers recently denied food stamps and other income supplements.

Union activists can help low-wage workers get their fair share of the credit. To learn more about the EITC, contact your local community services representative or AFL-CIO Community Services Coordinator Chris Marston in the AFL-CIO Field Mobilization Department at 202-637-5191 or cmarston@aflcio.org. ☐

SPOTLIGHT



All Aboard

U.S. House of Representatives traveling by train for a bipartisan weekend retreat in Pennsylvania were met by more than 350 union and community activists in Harrisburg March 19. Carrying "Don't Throw Mama from the Train" signs, the group urged the lawmakers to defeat a GOP budget bill that uses the federal budget surplus for an \$800 billion tax cut, predominately for the wealthy. President Bill Clinton's budget proposal would set aside the surplus to strengthen Social Security and Medicare. ☐

Building Coalitions FOR JUSTICE

Jobs With Justice, known in local communities across the nation for mobilizing activists and communities around a range of working family issues, is moving full speed ahead with its "Right to Organize" campaign. JWJ launched the campaign last year after fight-

Rally for rights: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson joined hundreds of Jobs With Justice members who rallied in support of poultry workers during the group's recent conference.



MARTHA WORK

ing to reinstate a worker fired during a UNITE organizing drive at Roger's Foam in Somerville, Mass. Although the worker got his job back, his co-workers were so intimidated, they voted against the

union—demonstrating the necessity of building an offensive strategy to prevent attacks on workers' right to organize, says the JWJ newsletter *I'll Be There*.

In February, participants at the annual Jobs With Justice meeting in Louisville, Ky., examined examples of campaigns in which community support made a difference, such as living wage campaigns in Boston and Los Angeles. ☐

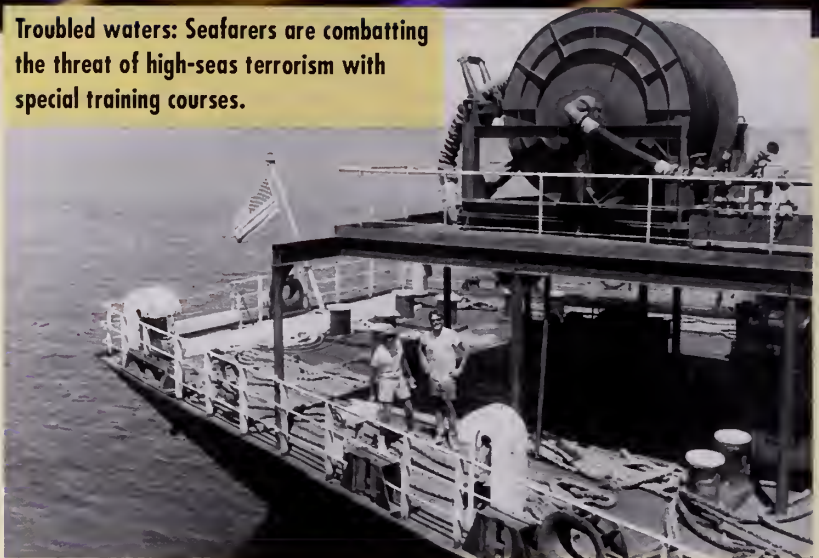
Union Leader Heads Alabama Labor Department

Barney Weeks, retired president of the Alabama AFL-CIO, was appointed acting labor commissioner by Alabama Gov. Don Siegelman. Weeks, 85, headed the state federation from 1957 to 1983, helping win legislation in 1969 that made Alabama the first state to require employers to pay full-time workers wages they lost while serving on jury duty. Unions defended the law all the way to the Supreme Court, which upheld the decision in 1973.

The new commissioner began his career working as a typographer at the *Montgomery Advertiser* and *Alabama Journal* and is still a member of Typographical Union Local 222. He played a big role in establishing the Center for Labor Education and Research at the University of Alabama in Birmingham.

Weeks praises Siegelman as a "tireless worker," adding that "anybody like that, I want to help." ☐

Troubled waters: Seafarers are combatting the threat of high-seas terrorism with special training courses.



PREVENTING HIGH-SEAS TERRORISM

High-seas terrorism is a growing threat to the lives of those who work on the world's oceans. When seven pirates in a speedboat intercepted the Panamanian cargo ship *Cheung Son* last year, 23 crew members lost their lives. The *South China Morning Post* said it was believed to be the ninth such incident for the year in the

South China Sea alone.

Seafarers now offers a course to help members prevent and cope with seaborne terror. Conducted at the union's Center for Maritime Training and Education in Maryland, the class enables participants to identify potential threats, understand the motivation behind terror and survive an attack. The SIU has designed the curriculum to apply to both military and commercial fleets.

"This training is meant to help the members, help our contracted companies and help the military," says Bill Eglinton, the center's director of vocational education. "It really simplifies things all the way around." ☐

Bargaining Strategies

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Rich Trumka joins Graphic Communications President James Norton at the union's Coordination of Bargaining conference in Pittsburgh. Trumka told participants that labor must link organizing, political action, collective bargaining and capital strategies to combat ongoing attacks from employers and Wall Street. The three-day biennial conference examined the printing industry's economic outlook, as well as organizing, Social Security, health care and legislative action.



SUSAN ZACHEM

A Dose of Organizing

On call: Dr. Barry Liebowitz (right), president of the NDA, joins SEIU President Andrew Stern in announcing a nationwide campaign to organize physicians.



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

Mobilizing to give doctors a stronger voice to ensure that quality patient care takes precedence over corporate

profit, three doctors' unions have joined with SEIU to launch a coordinated organizing campaign among the nation's 600,000 practicing physicians. In March, the New York City-based Doctors Council joined with two SEIU affiliates, the Committee of Interns and Residents and United

Salaried Physicians and Dentists, to form the National Doctors Alliance. "Medicine has been infected by a 'big business' mentality," said Dr. Barry Liebowitz, president of the NDA, as he joined SEIU President Andrew Stern in announcing the alliance. "Union membership provides doctors with a countervailing force against the denial of medical care for the sake of corporate profits." ☐

Diversity IS GOOD BUSINESS

Corporate America is realizing what union members have said for years: A diverse workforce is good for business. A recent American Management Association survey found that companies with women and minorities in senior management positions consistently outperform, in sales and profits, companies that have a more homogeneous top tier.

The association, with the participation of the Business and Professional Women's Foundation, compared the sales revenue and senior staff diversity of more than 1,000 companies in 1996 and 1997. The report found that in firms with the highest increase in gross sales revenues, a majority of top managers were women or were younger than 40. Firms with a female majority in senior management increased sales by an average 22.9 percent, while firms with all-male senior management raised their bottom lines by only 12.6 percent. In companies where the majority of top management was younger than 40, sales jumped 30.1 percent compared with 12.7 percent in firms where all executives were over 40.

In organizations with at least some top managers of non-European descent, revenue increased 20.2 percent compared with 13.6 percent where there were no people of color at the top.

For copies of the report *Senior Management Teams: Profiles and Performance*, go to the association's website, www.amanet.org or contact Carol Canzoneri at 212-903-7933; or by e-mail at ccanzoneri@amanet.org. ☐

OUT FRONT

Seventeen-year-old Joshua Holt Castro died Feb. 27, buried under tons of rock and dirt in an Apache Junction, Ariz., trench cave-in. Safety equipment to shore up the trench and protect the high school sophomore on his weekend job would have cost about \$160 a day, according to the *Mesa Tribune*.

But, "It takes a string of deaths before people start putting their money where their mouth is as far as making trenches safe," says Larry Etchechury, director of the state's Industrial Commission.

As we observe Workers Memorial Day April 28, we should think about Joshua and remember that in so many ways we are *all* in the trenches. More than 60,000 workers die from job injuries and illnesses and another 6 million are injured each year, yet employer groups and anti-worker lawmakers fight to block needed job safety protections and weaken enforcement. Although 600,000 workers lose time from their jobs each year because of America's biggest job safety problem—repetitive strain injuries (RSIs)—industry groups and some members of Congress work to stymie the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's efforts to create an ergonomics standard to prevent RSIs. When workers try to organize unions to gain safer workplaces, employers fight back with intimidation and harassment. Many workers who raise job safety concerns simply are fired. And employers get away with all this, with few if any consequences.

Without stronger unions working in solidarity to make workplaces safe and to secure the laws that will keep jobs safe, we will remain in the trenches. The more we organize and build our unions, the more we will be able to do—at the bargaining table and in legislatures—to safeguard workers.

Success in organizing and building a stronger labor movement depends on our ability to demonstrate how unions make a very real difference in the lives of workers, communities and our country. And what unions have done and continue to do to protect workers' safety and health is one of the best examples we can provide. Workers now are protected from asbestos, benzene, brown lung and black lung. Although even one death or accident is too many, fatalities and injuries among construction and mine workers have been reduced dramatically. Workers have protections against HIV and hepatitis B. They have greater access to information about chemical hazards. And—although many still must struggle to get it—when workers are harmed on the job, they have the right to compensation.

Bow your head on April 28 as you think of Joshua and the tens of thousands of other working people who have lost their lives needlessly. Then honor their memories with your next organizing victory. ☐

(President Sweeney is pictured with Los Angeles County Federation Executive Secretary-Treasurer Miguel Contreras.)

Mourn for the Dead. Fight for the Living



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

With the Community Behind Us, We Can't Lose

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

How union-community coalitions are showing that good jobs make strong communities

create stable communities," says Stewart Acuff, president of the Atlanta Central Labor Council. "It is very hard to build stable communities on shaky wages. Too much of people's energy is spent on survival rather than raising a family. If you're a janitor, you get up at 5 a.m. to catch a 6 a.m. bus to get to a job paying \$6 an hour, then walk across the street to a second job and get off at 10 p.m. By the time you get home, your babies have been asleep for two hours. You haven't had a chance to read them a story or anything else. It is very hard to maintain stable families and communities that way. You can't have the kind of communities we all want without good jobs, good benefits and living wages. And you won't have living wages without unions."

One of the key points of the AFL-CIO Union Cities effort, which was launched in 1996 and has since been adopted by more than 130 central labor councils across the nation, is increasing union strength through community outreach.

"The AFL-CIO's Union Cities program provides a strategic framework to help unions and community groups come together," says Machinists President Thomas Buffenbarger, who chairs the AFL-CIO Executive Council's state and local central labor council committee. "We know that active unions are the key to vibrant communities and that strong communities can bolster unions' efforts in organizing and building political power."

Successfully building and sustaining community coalitions that bolster organizing campaigns is key to growing the union movement. In turn, workers who are active in their unions benefit their communities. "It is the results of organizing that help the community," says Larry Cohen, executive vice president of the Communications Workers. "Community folks who have popular and democratic values have more opportunities to win their goals if they have allies, and organized workers are more likely to be their allies."

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN DAVIS

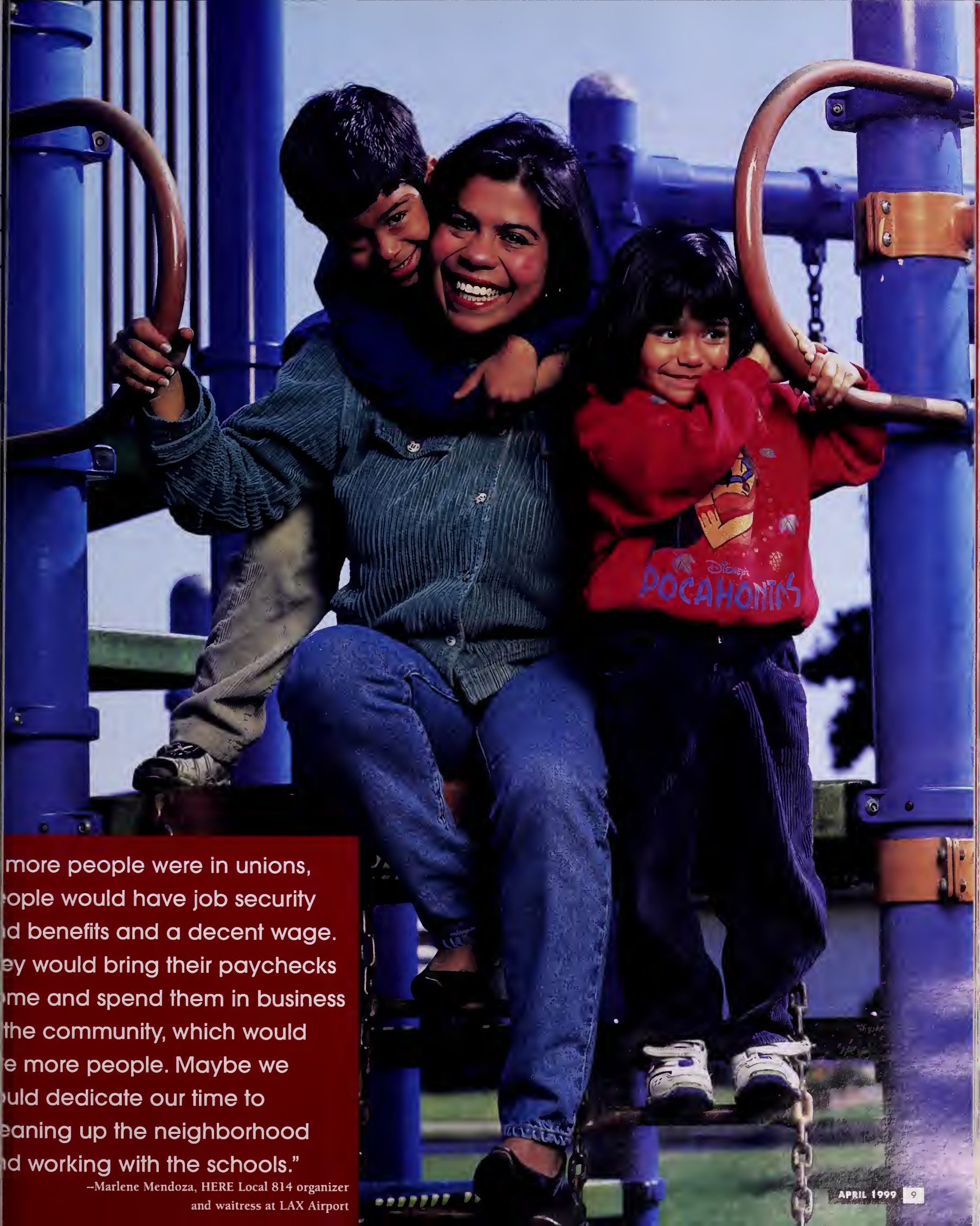
There's an unrelenting sameness to the long boulevards south of downtown Los Angeles, still battered years after factory shutdowns and two urban uprisings: rows of abandoned storefronts, liquor stores and stucco houses with bars on the windows and doors. Droning above the scarred neighborhoods is the sound of airplanes landing at Los Angeles International Airport, one of the city's largest employers, where hundreds of residents of South Los Angeles, Inglewood and Lennox work screening luggage, ferrying passengers with disabilities and serving food and drinks at hundreds of concession stands.

Many of the service workers at LAX—those who don't have the benefit of belonging to a union—earn \$12,000 a year and have no health insurance. Doing the same work, their neighbors and friends who are union members earn \$16,000.

It's not hard to imagine what South Los Angeles might be like if more workers had the benefits of a union job. And if minimum-wage workers making \$5.75 an hour at LAX got raises to \$7.39 (the figure a recent city ordinance pegs as the living wage), \$20 million a year would flow into the surrounding communities. Workers would use their share of that money to buy homes instead of renting, to patronize local businesses, to quit the second and third jobs they work to make ends meet and to have time to spend with their kids.

Union leaders know that when workers join unions, they improve not only their own lives but also help strengthen their communities. But few outside our unions realize that from Los Angeles, to Morganton, N.C., to New Haven, Conn., unions and good jobs make thriving communities—and that it takes unions to make good jobs.

"Jobs make for stable households and families, which in turn



more people were in unions, people would have job security and benefits and a decent wage. They would bring their paychecks home and spend them in business in the community, which would employ more people. Maybe we could dedicate our time to cleaning up the neighborhood and working with the schools."

—Marlene Mendoza, HERE Local 814 organizer and waitress at LAX Airport

LOS ANGELES

Lifting up whole communities

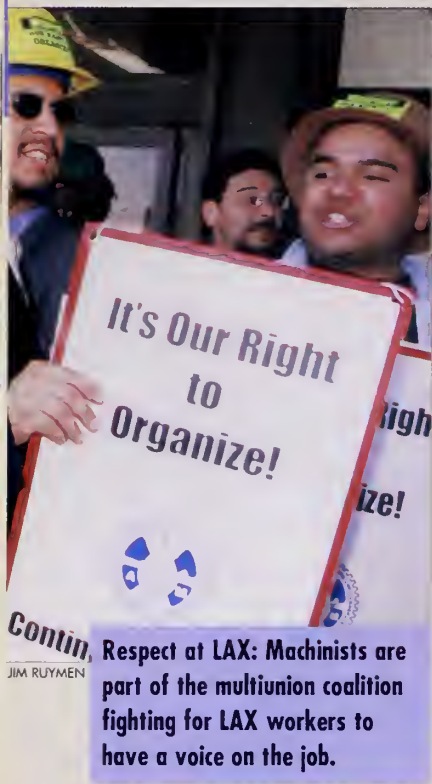
For years, many jobs at LAX powered an economic engine stuck in reverse. Low-wage, low-bid subcontractors hired by profitable airlines drove down pay and living standards. "We're all being punished because the airlines refuse to pay a living wage," says Jackie Goldberg, an L.A. city council member. In 1997, concerned about the proliferation of low-wage subcontracting at the airport, unions, religious, civil rights and grassroots groups joined together in a coalition called Respect at LAX and won the passage of a living wage law. Last year, they fended off airport subcontractors' efforts to be exempted from the law.

At the same time, community support bolstered the efforts of 490 concession workers, members of Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 814, in their successful contract negotiations with Host Marriott Services. The contract, ratified in January, includes wage increases that will pump an estimated \$5.8

million into the community and will provide health insurance for working families that have depended upon the emergency room for their health care.

"Together we are lifting up whole communities, bringing dignity and economic justice to our families, to our neighbors and to our city," says Rev. William Campbell, a member of Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, which was involved in the living wage campaign. The group led a procession to several hotels in Beverly Hills last year, enabling HERE Local 11 get recognition at the Century Plaza Hotel.

Respect at LAX is working to bring those same union benefits to thousands more workers at the airport through a joint organizing campaign by HERE Local 814 and SEIU Local 1877.



Respect at LAX: Machinists are part of the multiunion coalition fighting for LAX workers to have a voice on the job.

COMMUNITY Worker Justice



Mutual support: In Morganton, N.C., the Rev. Ken Whittington (center right) is pastor at St. Charles Church where workers at the Case Farm poultry processing plant gathered during their efforts to organize with the Laborers.

Marlene Mendoza, a HERE Local 814 organizer, works two jobs at LAX, and lives with her two children in the nearby community of Lawndale.

"You either have two jobs and never have time to be with your family or—with a union—you have a job with decent wages and benefits."

MORGANTON, N.C.

Reaching a new level of respect

The Rev. Ken Whittington, pastor at St. Charles Church, knows that the town he lives in, Morganton, N.C., would be a better place if the workers at the local poultry processing plant had a union contract.

Four years ago, fed up with low pay and abusive working conditions, the nearly 500 workers at the Case Farm poultry processing plant, most of them Guatemalan immigrants, voted to join the Laborers and are now in contract negotiations. The church Whittington leads has become an unofficial headquarters for the workers in their struggle for respect and jobs that pay enough to keep them out of poverty.

During a strike against the company, St. Charles parishioners collected food for the workers and sponsored a "work day" when church members and workers joined together to repair the church. "There was a whole new level of respect" between the new immigrant workers and long-time residents, Whittington says. "That's the real secret." A union-sponsored soccer tournament, second-language classes for both English- and Spanish-speakers and a citizenship workshop that drew 175 workers are also part of the joint efforts of the Laborers, community groups and the

Getting results: As part of the Respect at LAX Campaign, Painters and Allied Trade members join activists from a range of unions that have worked to pass a living wage in Los Angeles.



“When workers get a raise,
the community gets a raise
as well.”

—Phyllis Palmieri, a Morganton, N.C., attorney working with the Laborers

church in their quest to improve the community by improving the lives of its workers.

The contract being negotiated by the workers, who live in overcrowded trailers and have no health insurance, is likely to decrease job turnover and lead to a more stable workforce and community, says Phyllis Palmieri, a local attorney working with the Laborers.

“If more money were available, it would increase the demand for decent, affordable housing. When 500 workers get a 25-cent an hour increase, you’ll see that in the shops,” Palmieri says.

“When workers get a raise, the community gets a raise as well.”

Whittington says the organizing efforts are helping the workers “slowly develop a better image of themselves. They come here with downcast eyes and spirits that are kept under wraps.” The campaign “is allowing people to blossom,” Whittington says. “They have a lot of gifts for the community.”

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

Nurturing a coalition, building a community

During its recent successful campaign to organize workers at the Omni Hotel, HERE Local 34 in New Haven, Conn., saw the results of their years-long efforts to create an explicit connection between improving the lives of working families and bolstering communities.

Andrea Cole, a HERE Local 34 organizer, says the union learned its coalition-building skills over the years. “In the past, we went about our business until contract time came around and then we’d run around getting support,” she says. The sporadic contact didn’t create a lasting structure and often irritated coalition partners.

The turning point for creating a viable union–community coalition took place when members of Local 34’s organizing committee, involved in a bitter struggle against Yale University in 1996, became neighborhood organizers as well. “It became evident that the 600 jobs at risk did not concern us alone,” says Cole, citing the negative economic impact that Yale’s efforts to replace union jobs with low-wage temporary positions would have had on New Haven, the seventh poorest city in the nation.

Members of the organizing committee held meetings with their neighbors and community-based organizations to counter Yale’s publicity strategy. In three weeks, the workers pulled together 13 local meetings attended by 2,500 people. “At neighborhood meetings, we pointed out that if we lost 600 jobs, there would be 600 families with no health insurance earning minimum wage,” says Cole. “Community leaders, members of the clergy and elected officials started to really understand what was happening.”

Winning coalition: Ovella Watts, a breakfast cook at the Omni and HERE Local 34 member, credits New Haven’s union–community coalition with enabling the hotel workers to win the neutrality they needed to organize.



In the wake of the neighborhood gatherings, the Greater New Haven Clergy Association signed a statement supporting the workers and published it in a full-page newspaper ad. Shortly after, the strike against Yale ended, with the workers saving their jobs and even improving wages and benefits.

Union and clergy leaders all agreed that the coalition had to stay together. It did—and fought successfully for a living wage ordinance that passed in a lightning-quick four months in 1997. Next, the coalition worked to win a neutrality agreement for workers seeking to unionize at the Omni Hotel, which is receiving \$10 million in public subsidies. The union and religious groups were joined by the NAACP, which sought to ensure that African Americans had access to better-paid, more visible “front-of-the-house” jobs. A united community effort helped unify workers and won the neutrality they sought, says Ovella Watts, a breakfast cook at the Omni and HERE Local 34 member. “They walked outside while we worked inside,” she says, referring to Elm City Churches Organized (ECCO). “As long as we have the community behind us, we can’t lose.” The success of the union, in turn, will aid the community by ensuring a supply of good jobs at good wages for all residents, says Watts.

With contract negotiations continuing at the Omni, efforts are now under way to organize 3,000 workers at Yale-New Haven Hospital. “Our entire community will benefit if 3,000 workers had job security and dignity,” says Cole. “This is a consistent message we use over and over again.”

Building power in the workplace and the community

As unions mobilize their members through labor–community coalitions, leaders say the partnerships will become closer and more symbiotic, resulting not only in better workplaces for working families but better neighborhoods as well. “We don’t organize just for organizing’s sake,” says CWA’s Larry Cohen. “We do it to build power in the workplace and community. We organize because there will be more people on our side in the workplace and community.” ☐

Strengthening Social Security for Women

BY LAUREN LAZAROVICI

Twice-widowed at 53, Dorothy Davis returned to school, received a teaching degree and worked as a substitute teacher and at a day care center. "I loved working in these jobs," she says. But neither one provided her a pension, and now that she is retired, Social Security is her only source of income. "I don't think my story is unusual," says Davis, now 83.

She's right. Many women depend upon Social Security for their sole retirement income. Davis' concerns illustrate how important Social Security is for women. Social Security is the nation's successful insurance program for the retired, people with disabilities and their dependents and survivors. For more than 60 years, Social Security has provided guaran-

teed, lifelong benefits for all Americans. But because women live longer than men, spend less time working, are paid less than men and are more likely to be widowed, protecting Social Security for women is especially vital.

A measure of security

Social Security has reduced poverty among the elderly in the United States astronomically since it was launched in the 1930s. In 1959, the poverty rate among people 65 and older was 35 percent. In 1997, it had dropped to 10.5 percent. But even with the support of Social Security, the poverty rate for women 65 and older is 13.1 percent, nearly twice the rate for men (7 percent). For women living alone


President Bill Clinton has proposed lowering the poverty rate by improving Social Security benefits for widows. If you agree that Social Security needs to be strengthened, not replaced with a system of risky private accounts, sign up for the AFL-CIO Social Security Action Team by calling (toll-free): 1-877-760-2340.

(primarily widows), the threat of poverty is even more serious: More than 22 percent of older women living alone are poor, a much higher percentage than married women in the same age group.

Social Security is one leg of a three-legged retirement stool. But the other two—pensions and savings—are very shaky, especially for women. Older women are much less likely to get income from a pension than older men. Only 26 percent of older women receive pensions, compared with 47 percent of older men. And even when women do get pension income, it's much less than what men receive. The same pattern follows with savings. Just over half of unmarried older women have income from personal savings compared with nearly two-thirds of older men. Social Security is the one retirement income source that provides a measure of security for older women, especially for older women who are widowed, divorced or never married. In fact, fully one-fourth of these women get all of their income from Social Security.

Other facts:

- Women live longer than men, which means they have a greater need for secure retirement resources. In 1995, a 65-year-old woman could expect to live to be 84 years old, a man the same age to be



No pension: Dorothy Davis, who worked for years as a substitute teacher and at a day care center, depends upon Social Security for her retirement income because none of her jobs provided a pension.

just over 80 years old. As a result, women need their retirement funds to last longer and to be protected longer against inflation. Social Security fills both needs: It pays workers and spouses benefits throughout their lifetimes. And unlike pensions and savings, Social Security is adjusted for inflation each year.

- **Women can't save as much for retirement because they get paid less than men.** According to the Census Bureau, women earn 74 cents for every dollar men earn. Women tend to be concentrated in low-paying jobs. Two out of three women workers earn less than \$25,000 a year compared with less than half of men who work. While three-quarters of all women are in the workforce today, many more women than men work part-time and spend less time in the work world because they are caring for children and elderly parents. But Social Security helps blunt the damage of this gap because it provides progressive benefits. That means that for low-wage workers, Social Security replaces a higher portion of the income people earned while they were working. Low-wage earners need a higher replacement rate so that they end up with a minimally adequate income at retirement. Under Social Security, a low earner gets close to 60 percent of her income replaced, while a high earner gets about 25 percent. Social Security's progressive formula is a lifeline that keeps many elderly women from sinking into poverty.

- **Women have a harder time qualifying for pension plans, which are skewed toward full-time, long-term jobs.** In 1993, 46 percent of men—but only 39 percent of women—were covered by retirement plans at their jobs. By contrast, a woman can become eligible for Social Security benefits based on her own work history or on her husband's work history. A woman married to a retired man can get a benefit equal to as much as 50 percent of his benefit. A widow can get 100 percent of her husband's benefits. Divorced women get similar protections from Social Security. If a woman works intermittently during her career, she only needs a total of 10 years of work experience over her lifetime to qualify for Social Security.

- **Women are widowed more often than men because they live longer and tend to marry older men—and as a result, are more likely to be poor.** Only 4.4 percent of older married couples were poor in 1996, but nearly 19 percent of widowed older women were poor. Unlike most pensions, Social Security guarantees benefits to women. A surviving spouse receives a benefit equal to 100 percent of the workers' benefit. Men qualify for this, too, but 99 percent of older Americans getting the surviving spouse benefit are women: Social Security keeps nearly 43 percent of older women out of poverty.

Women live longer, spend less time in the workforce, get paid less

and are more likely to be widowed than men. All of these factors mean that Social Security is vitally important to women. Any changes to Social Security should strengthen, not weaken, protections for women. @



Speaking out: At an AFL-CIO town hall meeting in Florida, women talked about why Social Security for women is especially vital: Women live longer than men, spend less time working, are paid less than men and are more likely to be widowed.

Privatized Plans Could Plunge More Women into Poverty

Some lawmakers and their right-wing allies are proposing schemes that would privatize Social Security and replace it with individual accounts—moves that are likely to require raising the retirement age to 70 or older and shred the safety net for millions of women.

Private accounts would not be designed to address the fact that women live longer than men. Unlike Social Security, which lasts throughout an individual's lifetime, it's possible that under a privatized system women could outlive their benefits, which wouldn't be protected against inflation. Nor would individual accounts provide benefits for widowed and divorced women as Social Security does. Further, these accounts would be based on a worker's lifetime earnings—and because women on average earn less than men, a lower retirement income could plunge millions of women into poverty.

Some privatization schemes would cut annual cost-of-living adjustments that help retired workers keep up with rising prices. This would have the greatest impact on people who live the longest—women. Raising the retirement age to 70 or older would be necessary to fund most privatization plans. This would hurt women, who take early retirement benefits more often than men, often to take care of their husbands and parents. Cutting the guaranteed benefit level, another key factor in privatization schemes, would hurt those who are most dependent on Social Security for retirement income. Because women rely on Social Security more than men, they would be hurt the worst.

On the move: In Florida, UNITE's active retirees are among thousands of union members whose experience and skills are building union strength.



RETIRED *and Ready to*

BY ARLEE C. GREEN

Unions are reaching out to their most experienced members for organizing, political action and community mobilization

Life doesn't change just because you retire. If you want something, you still have to fight for it, and if you try, you can make a difference," says

Adele Rogers who, as retiree club president of Communications Workers Local 1180 in New York City, conveys that message to new union retirees to reinforce the importance of staying active in local union work.

"I've always been active in the union from being a shop steward to a local officer," Rogers says. When that activism drew her to a meeting of the local's retiree club, she was hooked. Now, she's the club's president.

The club's 1,000 members actively participate in the union's organizing, legislative and political activities and community services. And the benefits flow both ways—the local union gains strength from its retirees' activism and experience, and retirees find satisfaction in and achieve concrete results from their efforts.

For Rogers, keeping involved in her union is "a labor of love," she says. "It keeps me active, and it's beneficial mentally, healthwise and socially." Millions of seniors across the nation feel as Rogers does. And unions and the working families they represent are reaping the benefits.

Taking the initiative

Local unions have a responsibility to try to keep retirees active in their union, says John Barry, president of the Electrical Workers and chair of the AFL-CIO Senior Action Committee. The labor movement "simply cannot afford to waste a resource as precious as the combined experience, knowledge and dedication of its retired members." Involving retirees in organizing, legislative and political action and community activities is "the best example of our belief that union membership is not confined to the workplace," he says. "It is a social movement that involves all stages of a worker's life."

Too often, retiree involvement and the work of running a retiree chapter fall on a small "hard-core" group of able activists, says Erv Neff, president of two Minnesota CLC retiree clubs. Doubling or tripling the size of that dedicated base takes a tremendous effort. But local unions that make the effort see concrete gains, he says, at the bargaining table, in organizing, in legislative progress and in community support.

"The satisfaction of knowing I helped somebody"

As today's unions commit greater resources to organizing, union retirees who have experienced the "union difference" are in a unique position to aid in the union movement's organizing surge by explaining to nonunion workers how

unions benefit working families by gaining higher wages, better benefits and larger pensions.

Denis O'Donnell, who heads the Electronics Workers' retired members council, says when his union sent questionnaires to its 50,000 retirees in 1998, an astounding number—7,000—volunteered to participate in union activities, including organizing. Union training enables retiree volunteers to join in local organizing cam-

Community action: Quency Adams Norman (far right) heads the retiree club of Pipe Fitters Local 811 in Houston, where union retirees collect food and raise funds for Bridge Over Troubled Waters, a shelter for battered women.

paigns, O'Donnell says.

In Cincinnati, Graphic Communications Union's OKI Local 508 hosts a retiree luncheon every six weeks to enable the union to sign up organizing volunteers and let the seniors know their help is needed, according to Harold Perry, Local 508 vice president.

In New York City, the central labor council subcommittee on aging's Senior Summer program gets support from Teamsters Local 237, which provides staff and a union office. Nancy True, director of Local 237's retiree

"The union movement simply

cannot afford to waste a resource as precious as the combined experience, knowledge and dedication of its retired members."

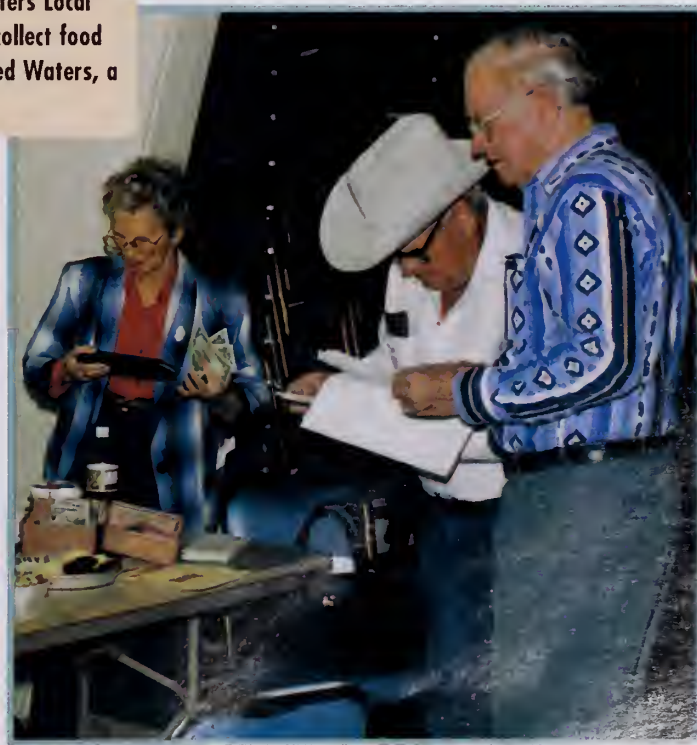
—JOHN BARRY, PRESIDENT, IBEW



MARIA ELLEN HUBNER / AFFILIATED GRAPHICS

division, says the union retirees are the "kind of activists who will sit in the middle of Fifth Avenue and stop traffic if they have to." The retirees have joined with HERE Local 100 in organizing cafeteria workers at Smith Barney, with UNITE in its Loehmann's campaign among store employees and with Machinists District Lodge 15 in its efforts to sign up limousine drivers.

SEIU Local 79 in Detroit ensures retirees are an active part of its large member-organizing program. President Paul Policchio "doesn't believe in people retiring,"



COURTESY QUENCY ADAMS NORMAN

says retiree-organizer Carrie Bradford. Bradford makes house calls to nonunion nursing home workers—and her 28 years working in that field give her strong credibility with the workers she visits. “I answer their questions and explain how I got involved in the union,” she says.

Organizing is also a top priority for Francis Martin, a retiree and president of Mine Workers Local 7635 in Gary, W.Va. “Without organizing, the union dies,” he says. Martin has worked on several organizing drives and says retirees know the benefits of being a union member and have been “trained in the tradition of organizing working people.” That’s why he urges other retirees to not just “sit back and draw a pension,” but to “stay involved with the union and support it every way they can.”

To underscore what it can mean to have a union, Bradford points out that Local 79 bargained to designate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday as a January holiday more than a decade before it became a national holiday. “I believe in the union,” Bradford says softly. And when she’s out organizing, Bradford says she gets “the satisfaction of knowing I helped somebody.”

The key is motivation

Local unions that fully involve their seniors improve the chances of electing pro-worker candidates and gaining vital labor legislation, says Jim Russell, a retiree from Letter Carriers Branch 576 in

ADVICE OF A LIFETIME

Doris Clark, president of AFSCME Council 31’s retiree council and an executive board member of the Illinois chapter of the National Council of Senior Citizens, has two words for union retirees: “Get busy.”

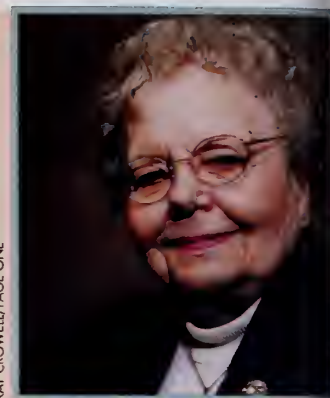
Clark says she can set the example for others because she’s done “a lot of public organizing and public work” over the years. “I vowed not to sit in a rocking chair or pick up a knitting needle,” says Clark. She’s kept her promise, working hard to add new members to her local retiree club, the West Central Illinois Subchapter 82, which covers five counties. Clark coordinates the club’s activities and says that whatever the members are doing, “I’m right there with them.”

And as leader of Council 31’s statewide retiree chapter, made up of 22 subchapters and 21,000 members, Clark strives to visit retiree meetings across Illinois regularly. She serves as the conduit for new ideas, solutions and activities and sees to it that Council 31’s local unions gain from the seniors’ input, especially on political, legislative and community service activities. Clark says while not every retiree has the health or time to join in every activity, finding one volunteer activity for each member is a good goal.

The key to involving new retirees, Clark maintains, is personal contact. Clark sends new retirees meeting notices with a handwritten note inviting them to attend. When new members ask what to bring to the potluck lunchtime meeting, she responds, “Bring yourself. Be our guest today.” It is the individual touch that works, she says. “We always try to contact the people on a one-to-one basis.” To keep members informed, she makes sure that meeting notices and other retiree events are announced on a morning radio show that has many senior listeners. She augments the radio spots with local newspaper ads and sends a newsletter to retirees to keep them informed about seniors’ issues.

Council 31 retirees willingly answer the locals’ calls for support. About 50 members in her local retiree club join in political and legislative activities, making calls to help get out the vote and writing personal letters to state and congressional representatives.

The main benefit for local unions is increased clout for all their activities. For union retirees, the payoff is “personal satisfaction,” Clark says—and there can be plenty of it for retirees who want to give back to their union.



Doris Clark

RAY CROWELL/PAGE ONE

**“Without organizing,
the union dies.”**

—FRANCIS MARTIN,
RETIRED MINE
WORKER AND
PRESIDENT OF
UMWA LOCAL
7635



ERIC DINOVO

Phoenix. When the Hatch Act barred federal employees from participating in political action, federal and postal retirees were their unions’ frontline political activists. Largely because of retirees’ activism, the law’s restrictions were eased in 1994. Now, federal and postal union retirees continue to provide their unions with extensive political groundwork including phone banking, membership mailings, leafleting, attending candidate forums, registering voters, writing letters, poll watching and getting out the vote on Election Day.

In Houston, union retirees’ political efforts were key to electing former Plumbers business agent Ken Yarborough as a representative to the Texas legislature, says Don Horne, who organized the Houston CLC retiree council. Yarborough won by 150 votes—out of 200,000.

Unions are most successful at involving retirees in legislative action when they target

issues that have a direct impact on retirees’ lives and when they actively work to maintain retirees’ continued participation, says Frank Stella, retiree director for the American Federation of Teachers. Retirees are then “more willing to support you when you need them,” Stella says. Unions that actively involve retirees can look forward to a high level of involvement: Stella cites an AFT retiree survey that found 46 percent of respondents had lobbied an elected official at least once since they retired.

Social Security and Medicare, both critical issues in 1999, provide ample opportunity for local unions to mobilize their retirees for action. “We’re not keen on having Social Security managed by Wall Street,” says Rogers. Her members know that “a lot of the gains we helped our union get are being whittled away by people who have a different agenda.”

Anytime there’s a state bill on seniors’

issues, Dell Morrison, a UAW Local 719 member and president of the Illinois State Council of Senior Citizens, mobilizes hundreds of seniors for action in Springfield. "We've sent 18 buses full of seniors to lobby the legislature, raise a lot of sam and get up and speak out on the issues," Morrison says.

The key to mobilization is motivation. O'Donnell has found that seniors will turn out if "you give them some stake in the outcome." Let them know how legislation may affect them or their children or grandchildren.

Long-term community ties

Local unions that seek community support for organizing, bargaining, political and legislative efforts know that enlisting local groups as partners is not a one-way street: You have to give to get. Retirees often have long-term community ties and the time and desire to offer hands-on volunteer support that can strengthen the union's ties to local food banks, soup kitchens, hospitals, schools, libraries, civil rights groups and other community organizations.

Retirees of Pipe Fitters Local 811 in Houston regularly collect food and raise funds for Bridge Over Troubled Waters, a shelter for battered women, and for a downtown mission for the homeless, says Quency Adams Norman, head of the local's retiree club. Norman says his club boosts retiree involvement by including spouses in activities.

In Wichita, Kan., retirees of Letter Carriers Branch 201 "adopted" a two-mile stretch of highway and periodically clean up the roadside. In turn, the state posted a sign crediting the NALC group. Branch retirees also participate in annual fundraisers for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

A catalyst for union action

Retiree involvement can be a catalyst to boosting organizing efforts, electing pro-worker candidates, winning family-friendly legislation and improving labor's image in the community. When local unions fully utilize their retirees' energy and wisdom, "they achieve more in every area," says Bernard Brommer, president of the Minnesota AFL-CIO. "That's why it's important for every union make retiree involvement a priority." @

"We're not keen on having Social Security managed by Wall Street."

—ADELE ROGERS,
RETIREE-ACTIVIST,
CWA LOCAL 1180



ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN

INVOLVING RETIREES

Here are key points to keep in mind when involving retirees in organizing, legislative, political and community action:

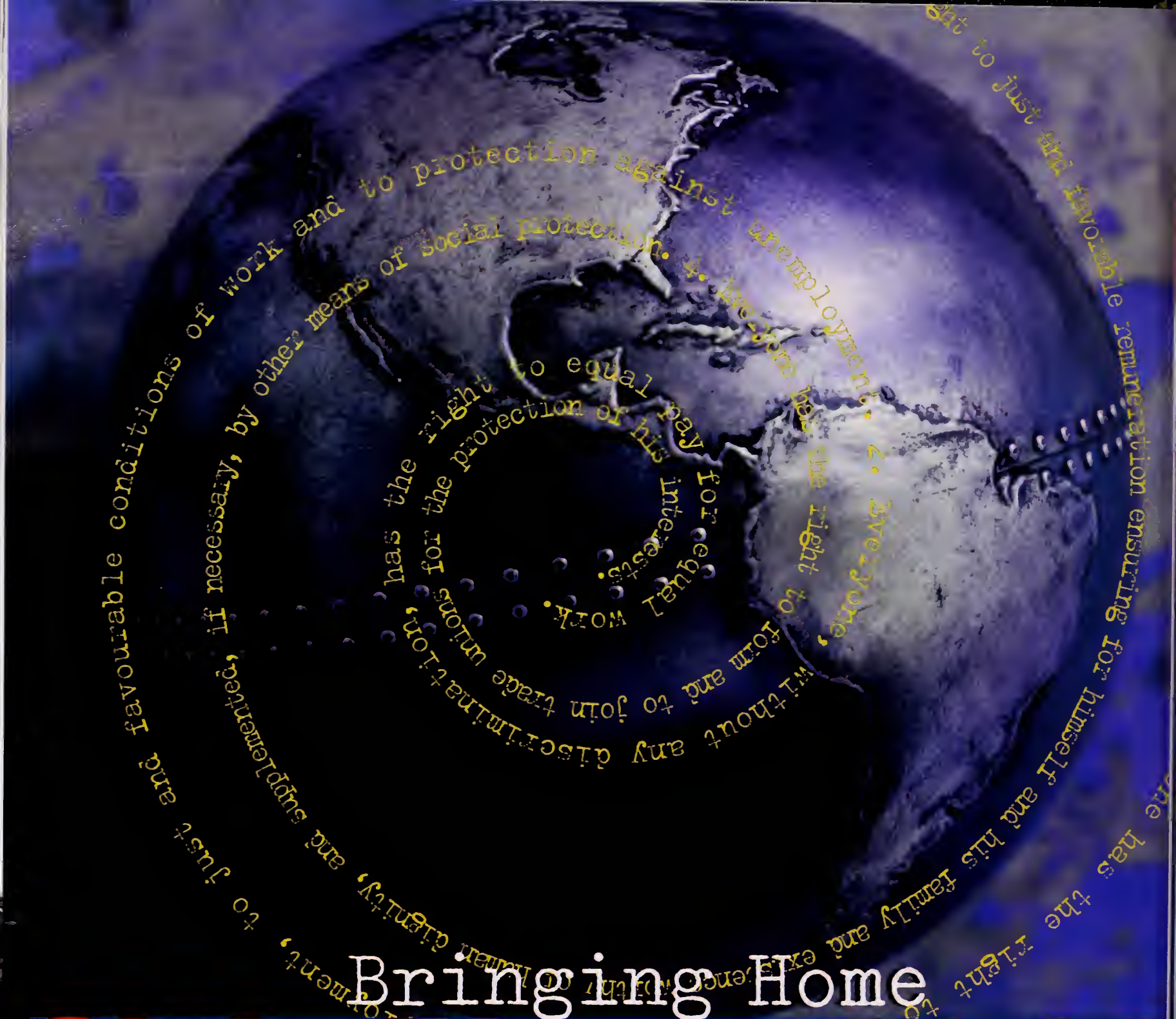
- **Lay the foundation.** Build a strong retiree program by keeping seniors active. Stay in touch with retirees through personal contact and newsletters. If your local union has a retirees' club, invite new retirees to join and consider paying their first year's club dues. Ensure that one local officer attends retiree meetings to keep members up to date on the union's priorities and activities. Hold events strictly for building retiree involvement and develop a list of activities in which they can take part. Sign up retiree volunteers and follow through with phone calls to let them know when they can help. "The main responsibility [for reaching out to retirees] has to come from the union officials," says Marty Berger, Pennsylvania AFL-CIO retiree coordinator and president of the state National Council of Senior Citizens chapter.

- **Communicate.** Regular communication is key to mobilizing union retirees. Make sure retirees know they're still a valuable part of their union by publishing a regular column in the local union's newspaper, even if their club has its own newsletter. Add a retirees' page to your local union's Internet site. Include seniors in all member outreach efforts. Enclose volunteer cards as part of regular retiree mailings. Encourage seniors who live far from your local union to join or form a retiree club in their area. Bill "Scrappy" Allen, president of SEIU Local 585's retiree club and the Allegheny County, Pa., CLC Retirees Council, says the only sure way to reach his geographically diverse membership is to "mail, mail, mail."

- **Take action.** Provide retiree organizing training. Form a retiree rapid response team. Set up a phone tree to mobilize retirees for picketing and other job actions. Involve seniors in an orientation program for new members and in a project to take union education into the schools.

- **Provide incentives.** Hold retiree meetings that feature guest speakers and that include refreshments, raffles, door prizes or other drawings. Accommodate special needs, such as arranging transportation or scheduling meetings during daylight hours.

- **Give recognition.** Reward involvement. Recognize seniors for their contributions, says Hani Lipp, UNITE's southern regional retiree coordinator, whose members earn "Retiree Rapid Response Team" jackets after taking part in 10 actions.



Bringing Home

Global Human Rights

Fifty years after the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, unionists throughout the world are renewing their campaign to make employers aware of the connection between living wages, safe workplaces, equal pay, health care, the right to come together in unions and strong communities

When workers' fundamental rights are observed—when they know they can feed and house their families, keep them healthy, enjoy equal opportunity, work safely and retire with dignity—they are able to contribute fully to the communities in which they live. In turn, their communities become economically thriving, vibrant places for their families and neighbors to live and work.

That's why the United Nations, in one of its first actions 50 year ago, adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Translated into more than 200 languages, it has defended and advanced the rights of the world's citizens and provided a reference for government and organizational charters. The Declaration makes it clear that in every nation, basic human rights—economic, political, cultural, civic and the right to join unions—are interconnected.

Around the world, a half-century's hard work by unionists and human rights activists has borne fruit. Poland's Solidarnosc movement, South Africa's COSATU—a key player in the long struggle to end the racist apartheid system—and Indonesian students and workers all are testimony to the victories that can be achieved when human rights violations are revealed, publicized and addressed.

But workers in other countries aren't alone in facing the denial of fundamental human rights. Half a century later, millions of American workers still struggle to achieve the goals the Declaration set forth.

"Everyone who works has the right to a just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity...."

Albina, a teenage sweatshop worker in New York, works more than 10 hours a day, plus six hours on Saturday and frequently on Sundays, sewing garment linings and cutting loose threads. If she finishes 3,000 garments a day, she might make \$35—below minimum wage. Yet even U.S. workers earning the \$5.15 hourly federal minimum wage often have to add a second or third job to feed their

families and pay the rent. Some 9.6 million Americans in 1997 worked for the minimum wage, according to a 1998 report by the Economic Policy Institute. On average, a minimum-wage worker needed to work 87 hours a week in 1995 (the most recent year available) to pay the rent on a two-bedroom apartment, according to a 1998 report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

Middle-income couples also are working more to make ends meet, increasing the time they work annually by more than three weeks between 1989 and 1996, according to a 1998 report by the Economic Policy Institute. Yet falling wages meant the extra hours yielded only a 1.1 percent boost in income. "Kids are going to work not just to buy an extra pair of basketball shoes but to help pay the mortgage," says EPI President Jeff Faux.

Forward-thinking employers know that when workers are paid a living wage, they have the means to contribute to their local economy. They contribute to the tax base, spend more on food and clothing, reduce the need for social services and spend more time with their families, helping to build stable neighborhoods.

"Everyone has the right to... just and favorable conditions of work...."

Nationally, 6,218 U.S. workers died from traumatic workplace injuries in 1997, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unions regularly help expose dangers in workplaces—and how workplace hazards can affect entire communities. When a strike by Communications Workers Local 6139 put the spotlight on Helena Laboratories in Beaumont, Texas, where workers were exposed to hepatitis B, HIV and dangerous levels of airborne mercury, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration rushed in with a surprise inspection. It turns out that blood wastes were dumped into the public sewage system, CWA says. The Environmental Protection Agency also is investigating whether the lab's discharge of mercury and other toxins is a danger to area residents.

"Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work."

Because of unequal pay for working

A World Map of Injustice

Workers across the globe are struggling for their basic human right to organize:

- In China's Sichuan Province, Liu Tingchai and Yan Jinghong were imprisoned in a labor camp for "disrupting social order" after leading 500 workers to demand three months' unpaid wages.

- Despite the end of decades of rule by Indonesia's repressive regime, employees of state agencies and enterprises still are prohibited from joining independent unions, and hundreds of workers demanding higher wages risk continued attacks by authorities armed with rubber bullets, rifle butts and other weapons.

- Immigrant garment workers in the Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. territory, effectively are indentured by paying huge recruitment fees for the privilege of working up to 12 hours a day, seven days a week, without passage back to their home countries.

- Citing a drop in business that accounts for less than 2 percent of sales, Phillips Van Heusen locked out garment workers at the only unionized export-processing plant in Guatemala—a country where 87 percent of the indigenous people live in poverty—and made them sign away their rights as a condition of receiving back pay.

- In Las Vegas, the unionized New York New York Hotel and Casino contracts out its food services to ARK Restaurants Inc., which fired and suspended more than a dozen union activists rather than recognize majority support for the HERE-affiliated Culinary Workers. Nationally, Overnite Transportation, brought to the bargaining table after Teamsters filed dozens of unfair labor practice charges, continues to bargain in bad faith.



Injustice at home: U.S. workers are struggling for their basic right to organize, including the Teamsters struggle for a contract at Overnite.

women, American families lose \$200 billion every year. That comes to more than \$4,000 annually for an average family, according to a new report by the AFL-CIO and the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

If the gap in pay between men and women with the same qualifications, experience and responsibilities were eliminated, single working mothers would earn \$4,459 more a year, cutting their poverty rate from 25.3 percent to 12.6 percent. With equal pay, parents would have enough money to make ends meet, get decent health care for their families, save for their children's educations or save for a secure retirement.

"Everyone has the right to a standard of living [that includes] ...medical care and necessary social services...."

Verdia Daniels, who spent 22 years as a home care worker in Los Angeles, still earns the minimum wage—and has never had health benefits. "If you got sick, you'd have to keep on going," she says, even though she knows that her elderly and disabled clients don't benefit when their home health aides aren't well.

Last month, Daniels and nearly 75,000 Los Angeles home care workers formed a union with SEIU. Now they can negotiate better wages, training and benefits—including health insurance.

In 1997, more than 52 million U.S. residents aged 18 to 64 had been without health insurance in the previous two years, according to a Kaiser Found-

ation/Commonwealth Fund study, and that translates into heavier burdens for the community. In 1995, 77 percent of outpatient hospital visits involved Medicaid and uninsured patients, according to the National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems.

"Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests...."

The United States lags behind other industrialized countries, such as Germany, Japan and Canada, in affording workers the right to form and join unions and gain higher living standards and a voice at work. Eighty percent of U.S. employers faced with organizing drives hire anti-union consultants, and 32 percent fire workers who actively support the union, according to Kate Bronfenbrenner, a Cornell University researcher. When professors at Florida's Miami-Dade Community College sought to join American Federation of Teachers Local 4253, management hired a big anti-union

firm—and even after the professors voted by 2-1 to join the union last year, college officials hired a new team of union-busters to "negotiate" a first contract.

When workers at Shep-

herd Tissue in Memphis, Tenn., were harassed for trying to form a union, Shelby County Commissioner Shep Wilbun sent an open letter to citizens asking their support for the workers' "efforts to preserve family-supporting jobs." Wilbun knows that decent employment—jobs offering good wages, benefits and working conditions—benefits the entire community.

By harassing, intimidating and firing workers and skirting labor laws, anti-union companies and their hired cadre of consultants stifle workers' efforts to establish justice in the workplaces—and ultimately, in their communities.

Fifty years of struggle

Responding to workers' ongoing struggles to achieve the basic human rights enumerated in the U.N. Declaration, unionists throughout the world are campaigning to make employers aware of the connection between living wages, safe workplaces, equal pay, health care, the right to join unions and improving their communities. The Dec. 10, 1998, anniversary of the Human Rights Declaration provided the opportunity for a series of actions, many coordinated by the AFL-CIO and the Solidarity Center. To mark the event, activists in Uganda, Kenya, Kampala and Zagreb discussed workers' right to organize. Workers held some 50 town hall meetings on the U.N. Declaration throughout the United States. In Washington, D.C., AFL-CIO President John Sweeney joined President Clinton as he announced \$3 million in increased funding to aid torture victims and a \$30 million contribution to help eliminate child labor.

This year, unionists around the world will lobby their national governments to ensure the World Trade Organization addresses workers' rights at its multinational meeting in Seattle in November. Solidarity Center staff plans seminars and conferences to build support for linking workers' rights to trade and investment.

Their message: When workers are assured a living wage, safe working conditions, equal status and access to quality health care, they become fully participating members of their society, sharing their skills and talents for the common good. The most effective means of securing these assurances is by demanding and exercising



VIRGINIA HUNTER

Basic rights: In her 22 years as a home care worker, Verdia Daniels has never had health care coverage.

Stand Up and Be



The census form comes in the mail every 10 years, and many of us—about 40 million households—don't take the time to read it, fill it out and return it. But the stakes in the 2000 census are so high, we should be urging working families—especially minorities—to make a special effort to return the forms to ensure an accurate count.

Census 2000 may determine which cities and states will receive the most money for education, roads, new jobs and health care and which political party holds power for the next 10 years in Congress and state legislatures. Specifically, the census determines reapportionment of state and federal legislative seats, the redrawing of congressional districts and the distribution of federal funds.

"It's almost a life-and-death situation for working families, both financially and politically," says Russ Davis, president of AFGE Council 1 and a social scientist with the Census Bureau. "We need to treat the census as a social movement, like we did the Proposition 226 campaign in California."

Census determines power of working families

Seats in Congress—where anti-worker majorities in both houses hold the reins on working family issues such as Social Security, job safety, education and health care—and in state legislative districts are apportioned based on census counts.

The federal government uses the data to allocate \$200 billion in federal funds to state and local governments for education, housing, Medicare, transportation and other programs. According to the Council of Great City Schools, an association of urban public school systems, every child not counted in the census means a loss of \$650 per child in federal funds for a year. The undercount of more than 2 million children missed by the 1990 census reduced education funding by more than \$1.3 billion, according to the Children's Defense Fund. In the 1990 census, the undercount for California was 837,000 and 482,000 for Texas. As a result of the undercount, Texas lost a congressional seat.

"The 1990 census was the first in 50 years to be less accurate than its predecessor," says Commerce Secretary William M. Daley. "It contained 12 million mistakes, undercounting millions of Americans, especially children and members of racial and ethnic minority groups." The count missed about 4.5 million people, including 2.3 million children, according to the General Accounting Office.

Why? Because many Latinos, African Americans and other minorities so distrust government and government workers (such as census counters, who come to their doors), they don't respond to the surveys, says Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), a coalition of civil rights groups that includes the AFL-CIO. That can mean lower political

representation and less funding for minority communities.

"Ensuring an accurate census count is a civil rights issue," he says.

The debate over an accurate census count

Recognizing this barrier to accurate counts, the Census Bureau consulted with independent experts, including the National Academy of Sciences, to create a more accurate method of count-

ing. The result, endorsed by the Academy and the American Statistical Association, was a technique called sampling. The Census Bureau proposed counting 90 percent of the people in a census tract through mailings and one-on-one contact; it then would extrapolate the characteristics of the remaining 10 percent who were not counted based on the data from the census tract.

But anti-worker members of Congress are demanding that every person in the country be counted directly, either through a returned census form or personal interview. The Census Bureau and statistical experts say it is impossible to physically count each of the more than 250 million people in this country without missing millions, especially the poor and minorities.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled Jan. 25 that sampling is inappropriate under current law to determine reapportionment of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives. But the high court did not ban its use for other purposes, such as redrawing federal and state legislative district lines and the distribution of federal funds. In February, the Census Bureau announced that it planned to conduct both a traditional head count to reapportion House seats among the states and a second set of figures to distribute federal money and redraw political boundaries.

"There are still a whole lot of things in play in terms of this census," Davis says. For example, using sampling to redraw district lines within states could change the demographics in a congressional district and make it easier for a challenger to unseat an incumbent congressional representative, he says. This is especially true in states such as California and Texas that have had an influx of minority voters—who tend to vote for Democrats—in the past 10 years. According to the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute, in California's 1998 gubernatorial and senatorial races, Latinos voted for Democrats by 78 percent and 72 percent respectively. In Texas, 50 percent of Latinos voted for the Democratic gubernatorial candidate and 71 percent for the Democratic candidate for attorney general.

The AFL-CIO, as part of the LCCR, is taking part in a grassroots coalition-building campaign to educate workers about the importance of the census and to encourage workers to fill out census forms to ensure a fair and accurate counts. For more information on getting the word out to your members, call the AFL-CIO Civil and Human Rights Department at 202-637-5270. ☐

—James B. Parks

Going for the Green

When it comes to helping sick kids, members of Sprinkler Fitters Local 550 are on the ball.

The Boston union is planning its annual spring golf tournament to benefit the Starlight Children's Foundation, a national group that sets up hospital parties and fun centers and grants wishes to put smiles on the faces of chronically and terminally ill children.

"This golf tournament is a team effort where no single individual can take credit," says Local 550 Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer George McCarthy. "Local 550 has a history of calling upon the generosity of its members and the Boston sprinkler contractors to donate time and money to help those less fortunate."

Last year's tournament at New England Country Club in Bellingham, Mass., attracted nearly 150 golfers from the Boston area and raised \$7,300 for Starlight through hole sponsorships, raffle ticket sales and greens fees. ☺



Helping hands: Sprinkler Fitters Local 550 members and UA leaders who take part in the union's annual golf tournament include James McCarthy, Bill Baynes, Dominic Carnevale, Louis Ackerman, Henry Kittredge, Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer George McCarthy, Marion Lee and Phil Kerr.

The Mouse That Roared

Flight instructors battling an \$18,000-a-week anti-union consultant during a lengthy organizing drive at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Fla., prevailed in their fight for a union last fall, voting 79-31 to join the Machinists. Workers rallied

with the aid of a pint-sized mythical hero, "Any Mouse."

As workers sought to organize, Any Mouse showed up as a logo on union posters, flyers and pamphlets, scurrying to address personnel issues and respond to information in captive audience meetings and anti-union literature.

Key organizing issues were pay and safety. Embry-Riddle flight instructors, exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act, were paid for actual teaching hours only, not for time between classes. Most instructors held second jobs to pay the bills, and the

length of their combined work week was a safety issue. ☺

Not any mouse: Flight instructors soared to an organizing victory with IAM.



ADOPT A GAS STATION

You can adopt a whale, sponsor a wolf and save a manatee or even a rain forest. But if you want to help some 252 union brothers and sisters and their families, adopt a gas station—a Crown Petroleum station.

As part of PACE's campaign urging Crown to end a three-year lockout at its Pasadena, Texas, refinery, the union's Adopt a Station program provides a kit that includes handbills and other materials supporters can use for rallies when they adopt a station (or Fast Fare/Zippy Mart convenience store).

In Baltimore, UAW Local 355 adopted a Crown station, and union members rally there after their regular meetings. Joe Drexler, PACE special projects director, says other unions and

Boycott support: Local unions around the country are "adopting" Crown gas stations, where they rally and leaflet in support of locked-out PACE workers.

student, religious, civil rights and women's groups have adopted stations in Richmond, Va.; Atlanta; Birmingham, Ala.; North and South Carolina; and the Washington, D.C., suburbs.

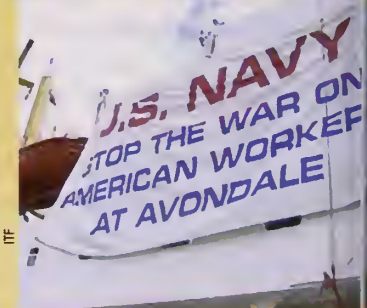
A group of employees who are also shareholders recently filed suit in federal court, charging CEO Henry Rosenberg and the board of directors with malfeasance that has cost shareholders millions in stock value. The suit says Crown's value dropped more than \$300 million during the past decade despite a booming stock market that dramatically boosted the value of similar refining and gas marketing firms. To adopt a station, call PACE Special Projects Department at 303-987-7906. For more Crown news, check out www.crownboycott.org. ☺

MAKING WAVES AT AVONDALE

A union ship crew sailed out of the Gulf of Mexico and up the Mississippi River to show solidarity with workers at Avondale shipyard in New Orleans, where union activists have been fighting for more than five years to begin contract negotiations in the face of stiff employer resistance.

Members of the International Transport Workers Federation docked their ship, the *Global Mariner*, outside the Crescent City, where they draped it with a ship-size banner (see photo above).

Later they launched two high-speed boats and, using powerful projectors, put on a light show with the new Avondale warship, the *Bob Hope*, as backdrop. They beamed slogans such as "Caution: Union-Free Zone." The ITF is a group of transportation unions from around the world that spotlights corporate attacks on the rights of workers on the high seas. The *Global Mariner* will dock at ports on the East and West coasts this spring, where its museum showcasing the working lives of sailors will be open to the public. For more information, visit www.itf-ship.org. ☺



Union Industries Showtime

Find out how movie special effects are created, see glass making in action and get a close-up look at how hundreds of other union products are made at the Union-Industries Show in Atlantic City, N.J., May 14-17. Union workers' skills and the products and services they provide are highlighted at the annual event, where participants can win prizes that include union-made household appliances and automobiles.

The show, produced by the AFL-CIO Union Label and Service Trades Department, features more than 300 unions and companies with union employees.

Admission is free, and the show is open noon to 8 p.m., May 14 and 11 a.m.-7 p.m., May 15-17. For more information, contact Dennis Kivikko, show manager, at 202-628-2131; e-mail to ULSTD@unionlabel.org; or visit www.unionlabel.org.

BOOKS

In *A Lifetime of Labor*, Alice H. Cook recounts her career as a social worker and union organizer with the Textile Workers Union of America, the Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, Amalgamated Meat Cutters and the Marine and Shipbuilding Workers. Cook, who researched socialist experiments in education and community organizing in the early 1930s in Germany, returned there to help rebuild labor unions after World War II. In the 1970s, Cook examined working women's issues, such as equal pay here and abroad. \$29.95. The Feminist Press of City University of New York.

ICFTU Collecting Union Memorabilia

If you have a labor poster, photograph or cartoon that illustrates workers' fight for trade union rights, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions wants to hear from you.

To mark its 50th anniversary, the ICFTU is compiling an exhibition that depicts the struggles of international labor movements after 1945. The confederation asks that contributors mail or e-mail original materials which the ICFTU will photograph and return. The final collection will be determined by early summer and made available on the confederation's website, www.icftu.org, and on a CD-ROM.

The ICFTU also is seeking artwork relating to trade union women for its World Women's Congress in Brazil this year. Send those materials by April 30 via e-mail only. ICFTU, 155 Boulevard Emile Jacqmain, 1210 Brussels, Belgium; e-mail: daphne.davies@icftu.org; phone: 011-32-2-224-0211; fax: 011-32-2-201-5815.

VIDEOS

The PBS series *Livelihood*, hosted by humorist Will Durst, is available on video. The series' four hour-long shows explore the innovative ways American workers are saving their jobs and creating new business opportunities.

Livelihood

- "Shift Change" focuses on how workers adapt to changes in the workplace, from downsizing and temporary jobs to the effects of new technology and a global economy.

- "Working Family Values" examines how workers are balancing their careers with their personal and family lives.

- "Honey, We Bought the Company" shows how, in today's rapidly changing economy, workers are creating new ways to save jobs by redefining the business culture.

- "Our Towns" underscores the impact of workplace change on the community beyond the plant gate.

Videotapes are \$99 each or four for \$300. To order, contact The Working Group at 510-268-9675 or visit www.livelihood.org.

MUSIC

Full Circle features a dozen original songs written by Mike Stout and performed by The Human Union. Stout, a union worker for 25 years and a Steelworkers member for a decade, describes his music as "working-class consciousness rock." Stout, the lead vocalist, and The Human Union, all members of Musicians Local 60-471 in Pittsburgh, perform at labor conventions, rallies and town meetings. *Full Circle*, on the

Convention Update

The Transportation Communications International Union will hold its 100th anniversary convention June 21-25, 1999, in Las Vegas.

American Blue Collar Records label, is available for \$10 on cassette or \$15 on CD; on orders of five or more, \$7 for the cassette and \$12.50 for CD. For more information, contact Mike Stout or Dean Hastings at 412-461-5650.

Also by Stout and the Human Union, *Organize*, is a cassette of original labor songs with a rock 'n roll beat. To order a cassette, send a \$5 check or money order, payable to USWA Secretary-Treasurer, to USWA Membership Development Dept., Five Gateway Center, Pittsburgh, Pa., 15222.

The Human Union



BIG DISCOUNTS FOR

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Limited time offer: Order *The Union Difference: Fast Facts About Union Membership and Pay 1998* today and save almost half.

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Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

MAY 1999

America @work

Curbing Corporate Greed

THE FIGHT FOR
GOOD JOBS

VOICES

IDEAS AND VIEWS FROM YOU

"I WAS ESPECIALLY PLEASED to see the story about the egregious and wide-spread abuses of human and worker rights in Burma [February America@work]. Your readers might be interested in a new AFT publication called *Burma: The Struggle for Democracy and Freedom*. This 160-page resource guide for teachers contains a huge amount of information about the terrible conditions in Burma and the struggle of the democratic opposition. Order from the AFT's International Affairs Department, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001; fax: 202-879-4502; e-mail: iad@aft.org. Single copy \$5.00; free for union members."—Helen K. Toth, assistant director, AFT International Affairs Department

Say What?

How have your union-community coalitions worked to get out the message that good jobs make strong communities?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue.

America@work

815 16th St., N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20006

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Fax: 202-508-6908

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Here's What You Say

ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION WILL GET WORKERS INVOLVED IN WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY:

"We put our Workers Memorial Day and Earth Day together. We get a park to clean and then plant a special tree dedicated to the people killed or injured on the job—workers are planting their family tree. After that, we have a picnic, with speakers talking about how we need OSHA and protection on the job. Depending on the weather, about 300 to 500 people participate."—Jan Czupek, chairperson, UAW Racine/Kenosha Area CAP Council and financial secretary, UAW Local 180, Racine, Wis.

CLARIFICATION

Peggy Ferro, pioneering AIDS activist, was a longtime member of SEIU Local 250. Her local number was incorrectly reported in the February issue.

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in America@work.

When you see

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and our

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and collective power

in our

communities@work,

that's when you see

America@work

"IN THE MARCH ISSUE OF AMERICA@WORK..."

"They rallied in protest of a local Ku Klux Klan demonstration [to protest the union community rally celebrating Martin Luther King's birthday]. The KKK group that was here in January was from Indiana, not Birmingham...." —Kirk Patrick, American Red Cross, Birmingham, Ala.

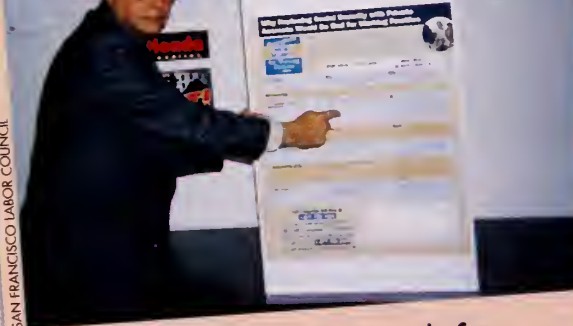
"IN THE MARCH AMERICA@WORK, I SEE NO MENTION OF STEEL DUMPING. You should be holding the..."

Clinton administration's feet to the fire over its failure to take any real action to stop the destruction of the U.S. steel industry....If labor doesn't force the Dems to come up with a true pro-labor candidate, this is one lifelong Democrat and second-generation union man who will back Buchanan in 2000."—Clifford Warner, president, Railroad Signalmen Local 193, Pittsburgh

[Editor's note: Grassroots mobilization efforts on behalf of Steelworkers are covered in "Standing Up for Steel," p. 18.]

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SECURITY

Since 1893
IN UNITY IS STRENGTH



As part of its member education efforts, the San Francisco Labor Council enlarged the back cover of the February America@work, which compares Social Security benefits to proposed privatization plans. Labor Council Secretary-Treasurer Walter Johnson (above) submitted the photo to demonstrate one way AFL-CIO affiliates can utilize material from America@work.

America@work

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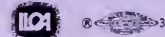
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4 CURRENTS

Making headlines: union-community support

A contract for the long (car) haul

A winning hand at two hotels

21 OUT THERE

A funny look at economics

Kids fight sweatshops

Bricklayers go mobile

22 TOOLBOX

Taking the corporate high road

23 HOMEPAGE

Working for America Conference

Stand for Children '99

From Coalwood to Hollywood



8

CURBING CORPORATE GREED—THE FIGHT FOR GOOD JOBS

As Corporate America seeks to reshape workers' jobs and lives to squeeze out even more profit, working families, their unions and their communities are holding corporations responsible through legislative, bargaining, organizing and investment strategies

9 WINNING FULL-TIME RIGHTS FOR PART-TIME WORKERS

11 BARGAINING FOR GOOD JOBS

13 CHALLENGING THE HIGH-TECH PERMA-TEMP STRATEGY

14 TRANSFORMING LOW PAY INTO A LIVING WAGE

15 THE HIGH COST OF LOW WAGES

16 DRIVING SOLUTIONS@WORK

17 INVESTING FOR OUR FUTURE

18

STANDING UP FOR STEEL

When the House passed legislation to stem the flow of illegally dumped foreign steel and save thousands of American jobs, the action was a triumph for Steelworkers and a clear demonstration of the union's strategic grassroots mobilization strength



19

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SECURITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Young workers face significant hurdles that affect their ability to save for retirement—and that's why polls show they believe Social Security needs to be strengthened, not replaced by risky private accounts

Many Languages, One Goal: RESPECT

The more than 200 workers at Townsend Culinary speak six different languages and come from all over the globe—but they have a lot in common. The workers at the Laurel, Md., poultry processing plant—90 percent of whom are immigrants who came to this country seeking better lives

Ratified: An end to harassment and poor working conditions for UFCW Local 400 members at Townsend Culinary.

for their families—now have a first contract after a nearly four-year struggle.

The Food and Commercial Workers Local 400 contract puts an end to the favoritism, harassment and poor working conditions that prompted the workers to vote overwhelmingly for the union in May 1996. The company refused to bargain, fired union supporters and engaged in many other unfair labor practices, says Local 400 President Jim Lowthers. Townsend dragged the election through the court appeals process until late last year, when a federal district court upheld an unfair labor practice charge and ordered the company to recognize the union and bargain.

“These workers are who we used to be,” Lowthers says. “Helping immigrant workers is what started the great labor movements in this country.” ☐



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

Hammering Out a Contract

Members of the Boston Area Maintenance Trades Council take part in an informational picket and rally at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. The 70 members of the hospital's Engineering Department voted for union representation by the council last year and have been in contract negotiations since August.

GEORGE MARTELL/BOSTON HERALD



AFA Makes an IMPACT

The Flight Attendants has launched training for a new generation of activists in a yearlong series of seminars, IMPACT AFA (Involving More People and Creating Transformation).

Flight attendants design and teach the seminars, which include union history, and explain how members can mobilize to make a difference in their union, their profession and politics. The seminars also illustrate how flight attendants help airlines gain huge profits—yet don't share in them.

IMPACT AFA “demonstrates that flight attendants have the power and ability to make dramatic and positive change to correct workplace injustices and win better pay, benefits and working conditions,” says AFA President Pat Friend.

Participants who sign up for a union activity are added to the union's database. To date, more than 100 members have attended the seminars, which began in February and will continue throughout the year.

“The workshop answered my questions about the need for unions,” says Rich Messana, who works for United Airlines. “IMPACT AFA taught me that the union is the workers and without involvement, there would be no power.” ☐

BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE



Flying start: AFA member June Bush.

Collective Bargaining in Maryland

Maryland's working families won a huge victory in April when the legislature passed a collective bargaining bill for the state's 40,000 employees.

The state employees had been covered by collective bargaining under an executive order signed three years ago by Gov. Parris Glendening. Soon after, 27,000 of those employees joined AFSCME Council 92 and negotiated a strong contract. The bill codifies those collective bargaining rights and creates a state labor relations board to settle disputes.

In March, hundreds of workers joined AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, AFSCME President Gerald McEntee, Communications Workers President Morton Bahr, Office and Professional Employees President Michael Goodwin and AFT Secretary-Treasurer Edward McElroy in a rally at the state capital as the General Assembly debated a collective bargaining bill.

“The executive order went a long way to bringing fairness to the workplace; as a permanent right backed by law, state employees can look forward to gaining more of the dignity already enjoyed by most workers in Maryland and the nation,” says AFSCME President Gerald McEntee. ☐

Equal Pay Day

Union and community members in Vermont were among activists across the country who marked April 8 as the day when women's pay finally caught up to what men earned the previous year. Nearly 500 groups, including state federations, central labor councils and affiliate unions in 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands participated in Equal Pay Day by holding rallies, panel discussions, lobby days, educational forums and press conferences focusing on the injustice of women earning just 74 cents for every dollar men earn. Equal Pay Day, coordinated by the National Committee on Pay Equity, was kicked off April 7 with a White House roundtable on the pay gap.



UNiTE's Designer Campaign

UNITE members at three Calvin Klein plants staged a hugely successful campaign earlier this year to keep the three jeans-wear facilities open and 550 workers on the job.

In January, Warnaco Group Inc., which owns manufacturing plants in Abbeville, S.C., and Nesquehoning, Pa., and a distribution center in New Bedford, Mass., announced it would shut them down. To save their communities' good jobs, UNITE workers mobilized local support, holding rallies from Madison Avenue in New York City to local department stores that carried the Calvin Klein line. Union members also gathered thousands of signatures from local residents and community allies on petitions to Warnaco, demanding that the plants stay open.

"This a great victory, not just for the workers but for our whole community," says Michael Fazio, a UNITE member at the Pennsylvania plant. "By standing together, we were able to make this company change its mind and keep our plant open."

In late February, Warnaco agreed to transfer the distribution centers operation to Aris Industries, which pledged to keep the center open with its current workforce. Two days later, Warnaco agreed to keep the other two plants open and to begin negotiations to renew the collective bargaining agreement, which expires May 31. ☐



Investing in Union Members

To ensure their investment dollars are directed to union-friendly funds, the Machinists, working with fund managers, created the IAM SHARES Fund in March. The mutual fund invests two-thirds of its resources in shares of 232 companies organized by the Machinists.

Initially, IAM is offering the fund as a savings plan option to members at companies that contribute to joint trustee plans. Later this year, employers with defined-benefit pension plans will be able to offer the fund as a savings plan option.

"The initiation of the fund is compatible with our goal of harnessing the power of our members' investments to better serve them and encourage the growth of the nation," says IAM President Thomas Buffenbarger. ☐

SPOTLIGHT

Making Headlines: Union-Community Support

For years, workers have seen nothing but bad news at the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, where the Copley Press-owned paper has waged a war against three separate bargaining units, according to Graphic Communications Vice President Lawrence Martino.

But with the help of the community, 120 pressmen who have been working without a contract since 1993 are fighting back. Since last fall, the GCIU Local 432-M members have been handbilling shoppers at stores that advertise in the daily paper. And when management declared a bargaining impasse, imposed its final contract offer and suspended Local 434-M Vice President Jeff Alger and two other workers, the community moved into action.

Nearly 300 union members and their allies rallied at the paper's main office in a March Street Heat action coordinated by the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council.

"The Street Heat action was incredibly successful and an encouraging start to what is sure to be very long and intense battle for a fair pressroom contract," says Alger. "We will never give up." Alger, who was suspended allegedly because smudges appeared on some copies of the paper, says he was suspended immediately after he was featured in the *San Diego Reader* as opposing management.

The workers haven't had a raise since 1992 and are looking for a 5 percent pay increase, says Local 432-M President Jack Finneran. The GCIU members, who pay \$180 a month for health insurance, are seeking premiums similar to nonunion employees, who pay \$10 a month, and continued participation in the union's pension plan, which the paper refuses to fund, saying it's putting the money into an escrow account. ☐

Just the facts: Street Heat action mobilizes support for pressmen at the *San Diego Union-Tribune*.





HONORING CHÁVEZ

More than 8,000 union members, Latino activists, community allies and state lawmakers walked three miles from the heart of San Antonio's barrio to the Alamo in the third annual César Chávez March for Justice March 27. Farm Workers Secretary-Treasurer Dolores Huerta, Electronic Workers Secretary-Treasurer Thomas Rebman and members of the Texas legislature led the march commemorating Chávez, founder of the UFW. The event was part of a week-long celebration in which the March for Justice Foundation granted 17 scholarships to low-income students. In Austin on Chávez's birthday, March 31, AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson,

Chávez holiday: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson joined union and community supporters in Austin who urged the Texas Legislature to declare César Chávez's birthday a state holiday.

the Texas State and Austin Labor Councils and Labor Council for Latin American Advancement rallied to urge the state House of Representatives to pass a bill (already approved by the state Senate) declaring March 31 a state holiday.

Since UFW President Arturo Rodriguez launched a major organizing drive in 1994, the union has won 18 straight elections, signed 22 new contracts and has seen membership grow from 7,000, to 27,000 members. "The greatest tribute to my father is seen in the continuing work of the movement he founded," says Chávez's son, Paul Chávez. ☐

A Winning Hand at Two Hotels

At the Reno Hilton and Flamingo Hilton hotels, 1,600 workers won card-check recognition with Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 86 in March. HERE set the stage for victory last year, when the union negotiated a card-check agreement for Hilton's Reno properties as part of the union's Las Vegas contract with the Hilton. Carpenters' backing, an active in-house organizing committee and HERE worker-organizers from Circus Circus Reno and Hilton sites in Las Vegas were also key to HERE's victory.

Unlike Las Vegas, most Reno hotels are not unionized, and the lack of market share has made it more difficult to organize. Union organizers believe they can build on the momentum from the Hilton wins and expand their campaign to reach the 15,000 workers at the 10 major nonunion properties and at the smaller hotels and casinos in Reno and Lake Tahoe.

"We've got 140 committee leaders who are prepared to carry on with the work they did here, and we've got union members who are involved and excited," says Lynn Flandera, lead organizer in the Hilton wins. ☐

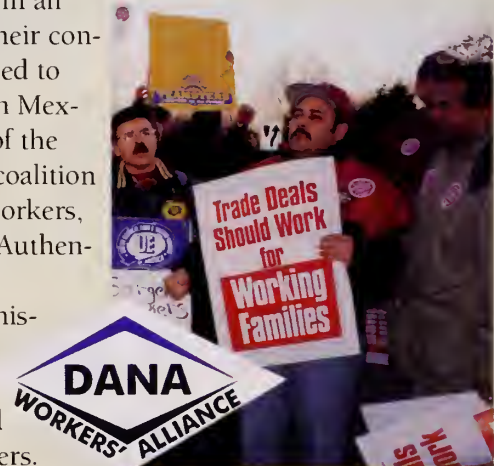
Tri-National Support

Union members and their supporters in the United States, Mexico and Canada are backing the organizing efforts of workers at the Dana Corporation's ITAPSA brake plant in Mexico City. Regularly exposed to asbestos and many other health and safety hazards, the workers now are experiencing job intimidation as they attempt to form a union.

"It is shocking to see what workers in Mexico face when they try to organize, even at a major corporation like Dana," says PACE International Union President Boyd Young. "We are challenged to unite workers in all three NAFTA countries and demand justice."

Union workers at Dana-owned facilities waged a day of action April 22 at Dana locations in all three nations asking that their contract protections be extended to their brothers and sisters in Mexico. The workers are part of the Dana Workers Alliance, a coalition of unions including Steelworkers, UAW, PACE and Mexico's Authentic Labor Front.

The U.S. National Administrative Office, part of the North American Free Trade Agreement, has shed light on abuse of the workers. In March, its Canadian counterpart recommended that labor ministers from Canada and Mexico meet to discuss the violations of workers' rights—the first time the Canadian body has taken such an action. ☐



Multiunion support: Workers in three nations rallied on April 22 to support Mexican workers' efforts to organize in the face of intimidation at the ITAPSA brake plant.

Warm Welcome



Fire Fighters President Al Whitehead thanks President Clinton for his work on behalf of fire fighters and paramedics. Clinton spoke at IAFF's March legislative conference in Washington, D.C.

A Contract for the Long (Car) Haul

The next time you see a truck hauling a dozen or more shiny new cars to the local dealership, keep in mind that the driver is likely to be one of 12,000

Teamsters seeking better job security and benefits in a new contract that prevents jobs from going to Mexico and nonunion firms. IBT members deliver 95 percent of the new cars shipped to dealers in the United States, and now they are gearing up to win a solid contract from the National Automobile Transporter Industry, the bargaining arm for the management of 17 companies.

IBT President James P. Hoffa rejects the car hauling industry's claim that it can't afford contract improvements. "With a strong industry, a growing economy and new vehicle sales at an all-time high, we can win the improvements we need," he says.

The Teamsters and the UAW, which goes into bargaining with the Big Three automakers later this year, have pledged solidarity in upcoming car haul and autoworkers contract talks. UAW President Steven Yokich addressed Teamster members in Detroit, offering his union's support as he joined Hoffa at a rally in late March. In his remarks at the event, Hoffa noted that "Together, there is nothing that the UAW and the Teamsters cannot achieve." ☐

NEW JERSEY HEALTH CARE WORKERS SEEK SAFE STAFFING LEVELS

Years ago, when hospitals in New Jersey put patients ahead of profits, medical and surgery floors usually averaged one nurse for every six patients, says Bernie Gerad Jr., vice president of the Health Professionals and Allied Employees Union/AFT. Now, he says, it's not unusual to find a 1-to-14 nurse-to-patient ratio.

As part of HPAE's Patients First campaign, the union is backing safe staffing bills in the state's Senate and Assembly that would set the state's first-ever minimum staffing levels for hospitals and nursing homes.

At a Trenton press conference introducing the bills, HPAE President Ann Twomey noted that hospital profits have



HPAE/AFT

Patients first: HPAE/AFT President Ann Twomey and New Jersey state Sen. Joseph Vitale introduce a bill requiring the state's first-ever minimum staffing levels for hospitals and nursing homes.

soared while hospitals have reduced staffing levels drastically. HPAE also is backing legislation mandating public disclosure of staffing levels, banning excessive overtime and requiring the use of safe needlesticks. ☐

OUT FRONT

When I talk to workers around the country, I hear again and again that they know their success is tied to that of their employers. But those employers don't seem to realize their fortunes are tied closely to ours: Corporate greed has helped make our wage and wealth gap the widest of any industrialized nation in the world.

As you'll read on pp. 8-17, our movement is directly challenging corporate greed in its many ugly forms. We're doing it because working families deserve a fairer share of the wealth we help create. But we're also doing it to force corporate American to ask itself some tough questions about the self-defeating consequences of unbridled greed.

- When you send good jobs overseas, who at home can afford your products?
- When you turn our full-time jobs into part-time jobs, who can afford the services you sell?
- When you use the lowest-cost, least skilled, unorganized labor you can find, who will want the second-rate goods you produce?
- When you shift so much of the burden of health care costs to us that we can't afford to insure our families, what shape will our children be in to staff your plants and offices in the next generation?
- If you succeed in promoting the survival-of-the-fittest approach to retirement security—private accounts—over the shared responsibility and guaranteed family protection of Social Security, who will care for your grandparents if they are unlucky in the stock market?
- When you pay your CEO 419 times what you pay other workers, thumb your nose at the notion of loyalty and treat employees as distant second-bests, how long can you expect them to give you *their* best?
- And when you deny citizens of your community the right to make up their own minds about whether to join a union to make their lives better, why on earth do you think that community will do anything to make you richer?

We see very clearly that our hopes for prosperity are tied inextricably to the fiscal and competitive edge of our employers. Perhaps we can show those employers that their prosperity is firmly attached to ours. ☐

Challenging Corporate GREED



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

Curbing Corporate Greed

THE FIGHT FOR GOOD JOBS

Throughout the United States, corporations are driving profound changes in employment relationships that affect all workers. Shedding responsibilities to their communities and escaping obligations to working women and men and their families. Changing full-time jobs into temporary work. Reclassifying long-time workers as independent contractors. Outsourcing to firms that pay low wages and provide few, if any, benefits. All in the pursuit of short-term profits.

That's why working families, their unions and their communities are joining together to demand that corporations live up to their responsibilities. In the next nine pages, America@work takes a look at how union members are joining the fight for good jobs through legislative, bargaining, organizing, living wage and investment strategies. Future issues will examine skills development, education and training as key union strategies to help working families meet the challenges of corporate greed.

Together with its unions, the AFL-CIO has launched a legislative campaign to address the inequities in part-time, temporary and on-call work (p. 9). Unions heading for the bargaining table this year will be holding employers accountable for maintaining good jobs (p. 11). A new organization of high-tech workers, WashTech/Communications Workers, is organizing a powerful alliance of temporary workers and independent contractors in Washington State's booming technology industries (p. 13). Union-community efforts to pass living wage laws are giving a critical boost to working families in cities and counties across the nation (p. 14). The South Bay Labor Council in San Jose, Calif., has established a union-based temp agency that seeks to raise the pay and benefits for temporary workers (p. 16). To preserve good jobs in the global market, Steelworkers are waging a winning campaign to combat steel dumping on U.S. shores (see related story, p. 18). And unions in every industry are taking an active role in shaping their investments to ensure their money is put to work in the long-term interest of union shareholders (p. 17).

Winning Full-Time *Rights* for Part-Time Workers

Just like their colleagues in the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* downtown newsroom, some 175 reporters and photographers who cover the news in the city's suburban bureaus are assigned stories and deadlines by managing editors. But for many years, the *Inquirer* defined the city reporters and photographers as full-time employees, while classifying the suburban workers as "independent contractors"—who did not qualify for health or pension benefits and were responsible for their own taxes. It wasn't until they joined the Newspaper Guild/Communications Workers in 1997 that they were classified as *Inquirer* employees.

In Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, hundreds of chicken catchers employed by Perdue Farms became "independent contractors" when Perdue reclassified them in 1992. The chicken catchers no longer receive overtime pay or any of the medical and pension benefits, vacation or profit-sharing options they once received as Perdue employees. In January, former chicken catcher Clarence Heath told National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, "I'm told that I don't work for Perdue, but I climb into a truck that has his name on the side. I pick up chickens that belong to him. I put them in a pallet that belongs to him which is moved out by a forklift that's owned by him. And put on a truck, a trailer that's owned by Perdue."

From the high-tech computer industry to home construction to academia to blue-collar industrial and factory jobs, Corporate America is cutting costs and fattening its bottom line by ducking its responsibility to workers and their communities. The result: Corporations are reshaping the full-time workforce to boost profits by saving billions in health and pension benefits, workers' compensation, taxes and the costs of obeying vital workplace laws (see box, p. 10).

In 1997, almost 30 percent of the U.S. workforce was in nontraditional jobs—part-time, temporary, independent

The new workforce: Poultry workers and their allies testified before a bipartisan group of congressional lawmakers who traveled to Maryland in March to hear how the chicken catchers lost all benefits, overtime and vacation after Perdue reclassified them as "independent contractors."



MARTY LAVOR

contractor or on-call employees—according to the Economic Policy Institute in *The State of Working America, 1998–1999*. And the trend is growing. In California's Silicon Valley, the advocacy group Working Partnerships says 40 percent of that area's workforce is involved in nonstandard work arrangements. Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show that from 1989 to 1997, the number of workers employed by temporary agencies almost doubled, from 1.3 million to 2.4 million. And independent contractors—workers defined as those who obtain their own clients and customers to whom they provide goods or services—account for 8.5 million workers, according to a 1997 BLS survey. While corporate apologists claim most part-time, temporary workers are satisfied with their status, BLS found that 59 percent of temporary workers would rather have full-time jobs.

In 1997, almost 30 percent of the U.S. workforce was in nontraditional jobs—part-time, temporary, independent contractor or on-call employees. And the trend is growing.

Eric Giest, director of field operations for the Newspaper Guild/CWA and active in the long *Philadelphia Inquirer* fight, says more and more news organizations—like other industries—are attempting to classify employees as independent contractors. Under current law, employers can cut these workers' hours or simply stop using them, in effect legally firing them for trying to organize—creating a huge fear factor among the workers, Giest says.

"But that's not much different than 50 or 60 years ago, when workers in factories and plants didn't have any rights under the law. But people found a way to fight back and win."

Nationwide fight-back campaign

Working families are fighting back. The AFL-CIO and its unions have launched a national campaign to work for federal legislation that would make it more difficult for employers to misclassify workers as independent contractors. At the same time, unionists are battling employer-backed legislation in the Senate (S. 344) that seeks to make it even easier to turn full-time employees into independent contractors.

Under current federal tax laws, a complex and subjective 20-factor formula determines whether a worker is classified as an employee or independent contractor—a process easily abused

by unscrupulous employers. The union-backed bill calls for defining workers as employees unless they meet three criteria: Their employers have no right to control them, they can make their services available to others and they have the potential to generate profit and bear significant risk of loss.

The union bill also would repeal a section of the 1978 Revenue Act that employers frequently use to misclassify workers. In addition, the Independent Contractor Classification Act, introduced in April, would require employers to reclassify as full-time employees many workers currently considered independent contractors.

The union movement also is developing a package of additional bills to help bring equitable wages and benefits to part-time workers and ensure that all workers, regardless of their status, are covered by federal employment standards such as wage and hour laws.

From academia to poultry farms

In other national campaigns, the American Federation of Teachers is challenging the erosion of full-time teaching positions at the nation's colleges and universities. In a 1998 survey, AFT found the number of part-time faculty members jumped 226 percent from 1970 to 1995 and could outnumber full-time faculty by 2001. While working to maintain full-time positions, the union also is fighting for equal pay and benefits for AFT members who have been forced to work as part-time professors, who are paid by the course and rarely provided health benefits.

Meanwhile, Clarence Heath, along with hundreds of other members of the Delmarva Poultry Justice Alliance (a coalition of unions and civil rights, religious and community groups), joined with the Public Justice Center to back a federal lawsuit on behalf of the chicken catchers. "Companies like Perdue aren't going to start treating people right just out of the goodness of their heart," Heath says. "You've got to get the workers and the community people, the civil rights folks, the churches together, like we're doing here. Show them you're strong and you're not going away." @

—Mike Hall

THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE?

- Almost 30 percent of the workforce holds nontraditional (part-time, temporary, independent contracting or on-call) jobs.
- Only 3 percent of workers classified as independent contractors receive health or pension benefits.
- The number of temporary workers almost doubled (rising from 1.3 million to 2.4 million) from 1989 to 1997.
- Fifty-nine percent of temporary workers want full-time jobs.
- Misclassification of employees as independent contractors costs the federal government \$4 billion a year in lost tax revenue.

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics; Economic Policy Institute.

Bargaining for Good Jobs

Hundreds of thousands of workers in every industry gave up benefits and pay raises in the 1980s to help employers that were experiencing huge losses or even bankruptcy. But with the economy booming and record profits flowing, workers heading back to the bargaining table are finding that many companies are renegeing on promises of sharing the wealth in more prosperous times.

"When times are bad, we're told workers need to tighten their belts and give concessions to help businesses and employers," says Elaine Bernard, executive director of Harvard University's Trade Union Program. "When times are good, workers need to give concessions to employers to assist them in maintaining business competitiveness. So when do workers get rewarded for their contribution?"

Job security on the table

Workers heading to the bargaining table will be holding corporations responsible for maintaining good jobs as companies seek to increase their already bloated bottom lines by downsizing, laying off workers, moving work overseas and subcontracting to nonunion shops with lower wage and benefit standards.



MACHINISTS

Job security: At Boeing, where IAM's contract expires in September, the key bargaining issue will be the company's continued contracting-out. Boeing has announced plans to cut 48,000 jobs—20 percent of its workforce—by the end of 2000.

When the UAW begins bargaining with the Big Three automakers later this year, the top issues on the table will be job security, education and organizing. The union intends to expand job protections won in the last contract and to address the threat of "modularization," which UAW President Stephen Yokich says is just another word for outsourcing.

The UAW special bargaining convention set an agenda that calls for income protections such as no layoffs due to outsourcing, new technology or negotiated productivity improvements. The union also will seek to ensure that members have the first opportunity to fill openings due to attrition.

To ensure that retirements and attrition do not lead to downsizing, the UAW will demand that companies make the investments needed to modernize their facilities and expand their operations.

The UAW also is seeking to ensure that the union is part of management decisions concerning outsourcing and contracting out, so if work is outsourced, it is fully replaced by new or additional work and results in no net job loss.

The UAW also will seek to make education benefits more universal and to require employer neutrality in organizing drives.

At General Electric, where the number of Electronic Workers decreased from 60,000 in the 1970s to 20,000 today, CEO Jack Welch was rewarded for cutting costs at the expense of working families. In 1998, he received pay and benefits totaling \$97 million. While Welch makes \$50,000 an hour, the average GE worker did not make \$50,000 in the entire year, says Electronic Workers President Ed Fire.

"When it's all said and done, GE has no real loyalty to any country where it operates, any community built around GE plants or to the workers who have dedicated their adult lives to



REBECCA COOK

Bargaining power: Meeting in Detroit, UAW President Stephen Yokich (right) and Teamsters President James P. Hoffa announced their unions would work together in future contract battles, with the Teamsters supporting the UAW in upcoming contract negotiations with the Big Three automakers.

rate leaders are the first to take their profits and run overseas or to low-wage nonunion shops here at home, choosing dirt-cheap wages over a skilled workforce."

Getting back what they gave up

At Kaiser Aluminum, Steelworkers agreed in 1985 to take a \$4.50-an-hour cut in pay

and health care benefits to save the company, with the understanding that Kaiser would restore the cutbacks when it returned to profitability. After the company saw a year of record production and productivity in 1997, workers asked to be restored to wage and benefit parity with union steelworkers at other companies. Instead, Charles Hurwitz, a Texas financier who bought the company in 1988, demanded more cuts, refused to bargain on health and safety issues and sought unlimited rights to contract-out.

When the workers struck last fall, Hurwitz locked them out and since has refused their Jan. 13 unconditional offer to return.

"We believed the company would reciprocate when times were good. But Hurwitz has chosen not to live up to the word of the folks who negotiated in the 1980s," says Sam Thomas, a member of USWA Local 5702 and a 25-year veteran at Kaiser's Gramercy, La., plant.

Hurwitz is reneging on his responsibility to stockholders as well, USWA charges. "In just three months, Kaiser spent more on its strike than the entire union contract proposal," says USWA Vice President Richard Davis.

Meanwhile, Machinists at Boeing may be facing increased health care premiums despite the success of a joint union-management committee that saved \$40 million through aggressive health insurance management. "You save someone \$40 million, and they turn around and bill you for it," says Buffenbarger.

The answer: strong unions

The solution lies in a strong union movement that uses its collective strength to demand that companies act responsibly. In heavily unionized industries, such as steel, auto and aerospace, workers have strong leverage at the bargaining table.

"The issue is more than wages," Fire says. "There is no corporate responsibility beyond the bottom line."

"It's essential for workers to organize to press for their share of the economic prosperity," says Bernard. Only by working together, she says, can working men and women claim their fair share. ☐

—James B. Parks

"When do workers get rewarded for their contribution?"

—Elaine Bernard, executive director, Harvard University's Trade Union Program

making quality products," Fire says. He heads a 14-union coordinated bargaining committee that will be negotiating with GE next year.

At Boeing, where IAM's contract expires Aug. 31, a key bargaining issue will be the company's continued contracting-out. Boeing has announced plans to cut 48,000 jobs—20 percent of its workforce—by the end of 2000.

"Corporate America always talks about teamwork—be productive, be competitive—and the American worker has excelled," says IAM President Thomas Buffenbarger. "But these same corpo-

Challenging the High-Tech Perma-Temp Strategy

Seattle is known for three things: rain, coffee bars and its booming high-tech industry, led by computer giant Microsoft. The Washington Alliance of Technology Workers (WashTech) is looking to make the region known as the birthplace of a new union organizing strategy in the fight to bring rights to part-time, temporary and contract workers.

In 1998, about 40 Microsoft "perma-temps," fed up with their treatment by the computer giant, launched WashTech. As a statewide voice for high-tech workers, WashTech aims to educate workers about their rights to organize and negotiate the same basic benefits as full-time workers. Ultimately, the alliance seeks to counter the efforts of high-tech firms and temporary agencies to squeeze profits by creating a new class of permanent temporary workers.

A few months after it was formed, the group affiliated with the Communications Workers, finding CWA "uniquely poised to help provide information workers with a strong and effective voice," says WashTech co-founder Marcus Courtney. In a 1999 WashTech survey of Microsoft contractors, 54 percent of respondents said they see a need to organize, but 40 percent are reluctant to participate for fear of losing their jobs. The survey found wide support for unions among the state's young, high-tech workforce, with only 26 percent saying they oppose unions.

Mirroring national trends in the high-tech industry, Microsoft utilizes a huge cadre of nonstandard workers—6,000 temporary or independent contractors compared with the company's 19,000 full-time employees. In the Seattle area, about 10,000 workers are employed as temporary or independent contract workers. Working side by side with permanent company employees, these "perma-temps" receive few if any of the benefits—health insurance, pension, vacations, stock options—that companies provide their full-time employees.

Courtney says his four years as a high-tech perma-temp—including two at Microsoft, where he was a test engineer developing Windows 98—made him realize the changing nature of today's high-tech workforce.

"This isn't a temporary thing at all. It's a permanent shift about how people work. Nobody was really looking at what was happening in high-tech," Courtney says.

While the industry promotes the image that "independent contractors" enjoy more freedom, flexibility and better wages than most temporary employees, Courtney says, "I think the

majority of workers are dissatisfied, even if they chose their jobs." In fact, the WashTech survey (available on the web at www.washtech.org) shows that 60 percent would prefer full-time, permanent jobs, and a majority say they did not choose to work as contractors but were forced to by Microsoft.

Although most job seekers in Washington's high-tech industry are interviewed by, tested by and offered their jobs directly through a company, corporations tell new hires they have to work through a temporary agency. WashTech's survey found almost two-thirds do not believe their agencies represent their best interests.

"In the last two years, I have worked in the same group, with the same agency, on a contract that is renewed every three months. When Microsoft hired me, they said I have to 'join' an agency," Lisa Lewis, a long-term Microsoft perma-temp told a Washington State Senate committee hearing earlier this year. WashTech and the Washington State Labor Council were instrumental in setting up the hearing, where Lewis and two other WashTech members testified on legislation to create a task force to study contingent worker issues.

It's a great deal for the agency and the employer. The agency pockets a hefty fee from the employer, while the company avoids the costs and obligations it would incur under a conventional worker-employer relationship.

At the urging of the software industry last year, the state eliminated overtime for some software professionals—despite a vigorous fight by WashTech, the Washington State AFL-CIO and others. As a result, workers flocked to WashTech, which now has more than 1,000 subscribers to its e-mail newsletter.

Through organizing, WashTech members believe they can make a difference. Says Courtney, "Workers have enormous power and, by organizing, they will be able to determine how the workplace operates and their relationship with the company." ☐

—Mike Hall



A capitol event: WashTech and the Washington State Labor Council helped set up a state hearing this year where WashTech members (from left) Anne Newman, Lisa Lewis and Heather McRae-Woolf testified.

WASHTECH

1998, Microsoft earned almost \$14.5 billion and turned a \$4.4 billion profit, according to the company's annual report. In early April, Bill Gates was worth more than \$106 billion in Microsoft stocks alone, according to the Bill Gates Personal Wealth Clock at www.webho.com/wealth-clock. That doesn't include his personal assets like cars, homes, planes and trinkets. You might say he's perma-rich.

Transforming Low Pay into a *Living Wage*

By the early 1990s, Baltimore—an industrial powerhouse battered by the flight of manufacturing plants—was making a comeback. Subsidies to businesses had helped revive the inner harbor district, a bustling hub hosting a convention center, baseball stadium and trendy shops and restaurants. But union and religious leaders were frustrated that even in the face of this renaissance, some people were being left behind. The workers who cleaned the gleaming buildings and gardeners who kept the lawns trimmed still were showing up in soup kitchens and homeless shelters because they were earning the minimum wage, nowhere near enough to support a family.

That insight sparked the nation's first living wage campaign. In 1994, after more than a year of coalition building, lobbying and negotiating, AFSCME and the community grassroots organization BUILD (Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development) convinced the city council to pass an ordinance requiring companies that have contracts with the city to pay workers \$6.10 an hour (rising to \$7.70 this year). Today, more than two dozen cities—including Los Angeles, Boston, and Detroit—have simi-

lar living wage laws, potentially lifting thousands of workers out of poverty and spurring the creation of many powerful labor-community coalitions. The living wage movement is taking fire, with campaigns under way in Austin, Texas; Alexandria, Va.;

and many other cities.

Across the country, activists are making the same argument: Corporations that benefit from taxpayer-funded contracts and subsidies have a responsibility to the communities where they do busi-

ness to ensure workers have a decent standard of living.

"Our local governments should not be fostering poverty by contracting with employers who pay less than a living wage," says Jim Cavanaugh, president of the South Central Federation

of Labor in Madison, Wis., where both the city of Madison and surrounding Dane County have living wage laws.

The living wage movement sprang up in cities and counties where residents don't believe the minimum wage is sufficient and see the need to supplement efforts at the national level to raise the federal minimum wage (living wage laws apply only to employees who work for municipal contractors or companies that receive taxpayer funded subsidies or support). In the face of fierce corporate opposition, Congress raised the minimum wage in 1996 to \$5.15 an hour. Even so, that increase hasn't kept pace with inflation: The purchasing power of the minimum wage is 30 percent lower today than in 1968. If it accurately reflected rising prices, the minimum wage today would be \$7.37, economist Robert Pollin writes in *The Living Wage: Building a Fair Economy*. A minimum-wage worker who puts in 40 hours a week year-round earns \$10,300—much less than the official poverty level of just over \$16,000 for a family of four.

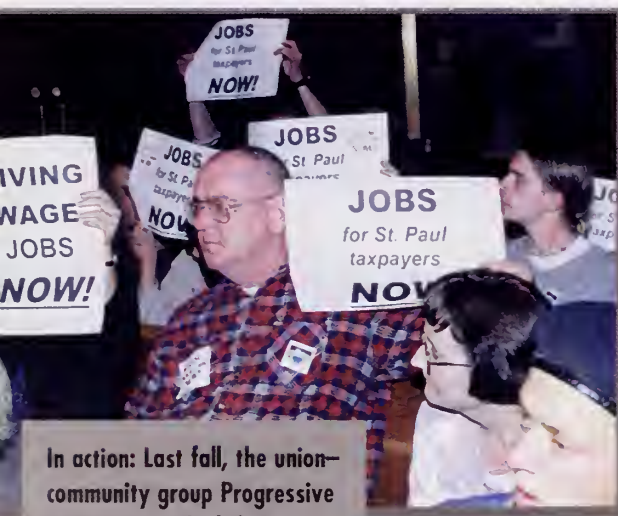
Dee Reynolds, who spearheaded a union organizing drive at the Milwaukee nursing home where he worked, says there is a big difference between working for low wages—unable to afford health insurance for himself and his young daughter—and getting decent pay. "Now I really believe in it," says Reynolds, who became an SEIU Local 150 organizer and now chairs the Living Wage Task Force of the grassroots economic development group Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee.

Union leaders know that building coalitions with community and religious groups is key for living wage efforts to succeed. In Chicago, union leaders and ACORN successfully linked a living wage vote to a move to raise city council members' pay. Rather than risk political embarrassment, the city council unanimously passed the ordinance after derailing it a year earlier.

Living wage campaigns are part of an overall strategy that leads to organizing gains for new workers. In several cities—Los Angeles and San Jose, Calif., for example—living wage ordinances contain provisions that may help level the playing field between unions and companies, potentially enhancing union organizing among workers.

Five years after Baltimore's living wage law went into effect, the nightmare scenarios corporations predicted—that businesses would flee the city, taxes would rise, no one would want to compete for contracts—proved false. A new study by the Economic Policy Institute shows costs to city contractors actually went down. Why? Because higher wages result in improved morale and lower turnover, leaving employers with fewer retraining costs. Treating workers fairly and paying them a living wage turns out to be good business after all. ☐

—Laureen Lazarovici



In action: Last fall, the union-community group Progressive Minnesota packed the St. Paul City Council chamber to demand the city enforce the living wage policy the group helped pass in 1997.

BARB KUCERA/UNION ADVOCATE

The High Cost of Low Wages



Barbara Ehrenreich

Barbara Ehrenreich is the author of more than a dozen books on politics and society, most recently, *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War*. In the following essay, Ehrenreich describes her attempt to survive as a low-wage worker—an experience that shows why too many full-time workers can barely pay the rent.

Last summer I undertook an unusual journalistic experiment: I set out to see whether it is possible to live on the kind of wages available to low-skilled workers. The math wasn't very promising, but since no one seems to pay much attention when I rant about low wages in print, I decided to test it in person. I structured my experiment around a few rules: I had to find the cheapest apartment and best-paying job I could, and I had to do my level best to hold it—no sneaking off to read novels in the ladies room or agitating for a union.

So, in early June, I moved out of my home near Key West and into a \$500 efficiency apartment about a 45-minute drive from town. I would have preferred the trailer park right on the edge of town, but they wanted over \$600 a month for a one-person trailer. Yes, these are frightfully high rents, but no higher than you'll find in most

Even in an economy celebrating unequal prosperity, a person can work full-time or even more, and not make enough to live on."

—Barbara Ehrenreich

places where tourists compete for lodging space with the people who fry their hash browns. Finding a job turned out to be a little harder than I'd expected, given all the help-wanted signs in town. Finally, at one of the big corporate discount hotels where I'd applied for a housekeeping job, I was told they needed a waitress in the associated "family restaurant."

The pay was only \$2.43 an hour, but I figured with tips, I would do far better than I would have at the supermarket, which was offering \$6 an hour and change.

I was wrong. Business was slow, and tips averaged 10 percent or less, even for the more experienced "girls." I was curious as to

how my fellow workers managed to pay their rent on this kind of income and soon found out that a lot of them didn't. The immigrant dishwashers (from Haiti and the Czech Republic) mostly lived in dormitory-type situations or severely overcrowded apartments. As for the servers, some were technically homeless. They just didn't think of themselves that way because they had cars or vans to sleep in. I was shocked to find that a few were sharing motel rooms costing \$40 to \$60 a night, and I'm talking about middle-aged women, not kids. When I naively suggested to one co-worker that she could save a lot of money by getting an apartment, she pointed out that the initial expense—a month's rent in advance and security deposit—was way out of her reach.

Meanwhile, my own financial situation was declining perilously. The money I saved on rent was being burned up as gas for commuting. Without a well-stocked kitchen, I couldn't make up big, economical dishes and freeze them ahead for the week, so I was spending too much on fast food. I began to realize it's actually more expensive to be poor than middle class: You pay more for food, especially in convenience stores; you pay to get checks cashed; and you can end up paying ridiculous prices for shelter.

I decided to redouble my efforts to survive. First, I got a waitressing job at a higher-volume restaurant, where my pay averaged about \$7.50 an hour. Then I moved out of my apartment and into the trailer park, calculating that, without the commute, I'd be able to handle an additional job. A few of my fellow workers held two jobs, and they didn't look any stronger than I am. For a total of three days altogether, I did work two jobs—including a hotel housekeeping job I finally landed.

This did not, however, turn out to be a viable lifestyle. Exhaustion was only one part of the problem: I never could figure out how to get my various uniforms laundered in the short time I had between shifts, and you only get one uniform per job.

At the end of the month, I had to admit defeat. I had earned less than I spent, and the only things I spent money on were food, gas and rent. If I had had children to care for and support—like the many women now coming off welfare—I wouldn't have lasted a week.

But my experiment did succeed in showing that, even in an economy celebrating unequal prosperity, a person can work hard, full-time or even more, and not make enough to live on, at least if she intends to live indoors. I left thinking that if this were my real life, I would become an agitator in no time at all, or at least a serious nuisance. ☐

—Barbara Ehrenreich

For a more detailed account of Ehrenreich's experience, see "Nickel-and-Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America" (Harper's Magazine, January 1999).

Driving *Solutions@work*

California's Silicon Valley long has been viewed as a trendsetter for both the high-tech industry and the 21st century economy. Not surprisingly, it's home to one of the fastest-growing trends in the nation's changing workforce: the transformation of full-time jobs with benefits into temporary, part-time and on-call jobs that offer no security or benefits. As much as 40 percent of the Valley's workforce comes under this new category, according to the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council. These clerical and administrative positions typically pay about \$7 an hour, according to Working Partnerships USA.

The region has nearly triple the national percentage of people employed by temporary agencies nationwide, according to a 1996 study by the San Jose-based Working Partnerships.

In an innovative response to the changing workforce, the labor council, area unions and community groups launched Solutions@work, a nonprofit, union-based temp agency that seeks to raise the pay and benefits for the growing number of workers forced into temporary jobs.

"We have to acknowledge that people work differently these days," says Amy Dean, South Bay CLC executive officer. "Our goal is to transform employment practices by marrying a placement agency to an advocacy strategy that, in time, will raise the wage floor, allow access to benefits and affect overall hiring practices."

Through a combination of community pressure and the organization's proposed code of conduct, Solutions@work seeks to ensure job security and basic benefits so workers who choose to work part-time won't pay the price in diminished benefits or job security.

"We'll be able to do that through a combination of advocacy and being a player in the market," Dean says.

Launched earlier this year, Solutions@work already has begun placing workers. One example is Reginald Martin, a 41-year-old former truck driver who worked for several temp agencies in his quest for a career change. Unlike other agencies, Martin says, Solutions@work not only offers higher pay and better benefits but also office skills training at nearby Mission College and support services such as mapping out bus routes to work and school.

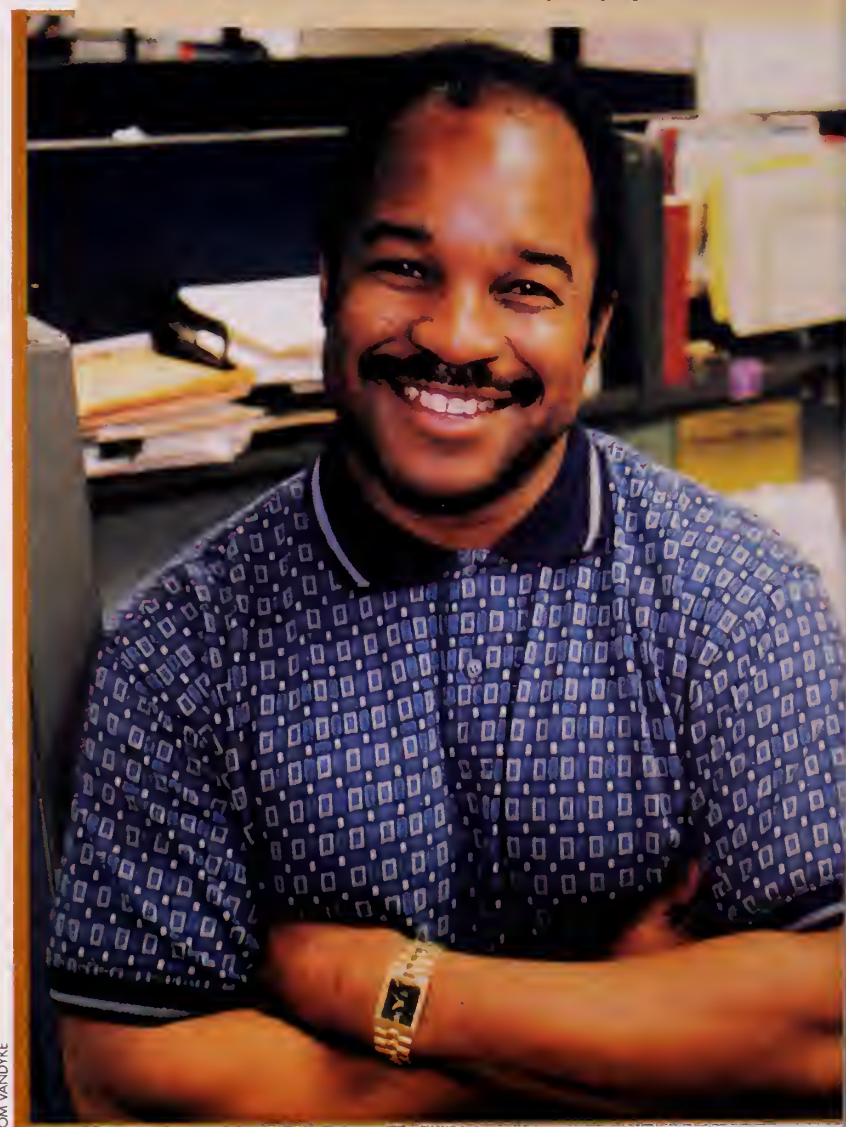
"I feel fortunate because I am reaching two goals at once: going to school and earning some money," he says.

As a nonprofit, Solutions@work will be able to offer better salaries and, eventually, portable benefits, training and certification. At the same time, by charging companies lower fees, the group expects to attract a large pool of employers.

The union-community coalition combines the collective power of the South Bay CLC and its community allies to help shape the future of the area's growing temporary workforce. The coalition plans to ask the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors to adopt a code of conduct covering temporary agencies working on county-funded projects. The proposal would bar firms that refused to sign the code from doing business with the county. ☐

—Mike Hall

At work: Reginald Martin, a temp agency veteran, says Solutions@work provides better pay and benefits and the type of skills training and support services he never received from traditional temporary agencies.



TOM VANDYKE

Investing for Our Future

On Oct. 1, union construction workers broke ground on the Residential Resorts International of Vernon Hills, a 287-unit retirement community in suburban Chicago.

For the area's growing number of seniors, the project creates more housing opportunities.

For union members, the undertaking represents a strategic move to create good union jobs and build stronger communities. The AFL-CIO Building Investment Trust, which lends only to 100 percent union-built projects on behalf of its public and multiemployer pension-plan investors, is financing the project. So, not only can unions with pension-plan money in the BIT look forward to solid returns, Chicago-area building trades unions—including Teamsters Local 705, Bricklayers Local 21 and Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Local 130—are creating work for their members and reinforcing good employment standards for all workers.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, \$1 million invested in multifamily residential construction produces 6.8 construction jobs and nine jobs in other industries. By that standard, the Vernon Hills project will generate approximately 450 jobs—200 union construction jobs and 250 jobs in other industries.

Making a union difference with pension funds

Building trades unions' pension plans have been investing in union-built real estate projects for decades—and their funds get superior returns because union labor results in high-quality jobs completed reliably and on time.

"When we're getting a good return on our investment, and we're building union homes, it's a win-win situation," says Terry Nelson,

A NEW VOICE IN THE BOARDROOM: WORKING FAMILIES

In March, 85 percent of Oregon Steel's voting shareholders opposed company management in a special consent solicitation—a move backed by a coalition that included UNITE's Amalgamated Bank's LongView Fund and the AFL-CIO.

Across the nation, similar union-backed proposals are seeking to advance high-road corporate policies that create long-term value for worker-owners. Last year, union-affiliated funds submitted and won more shareholder proposals than any other investor class.

At Oregon Steel, management permanently replaced striking Steelworkers, resulting in a \$30 million potential back-pay liability. As the company's share price plummeted, top executives sought to save their own jobs by preventing the board of directors from exercising independent oversight.

The coalition's proxy vote proposals argued that Oregon Steel managers had put their own interests ahead of the company's—and most voting shareholders agreed.

Corporate managers are recognizing that working families own one-quarter of the country's publicly traded companies through their pension funds—and working families intend to be owners in fact as well as in name. @

KAVEH SARDARI/PAGE ONE



Community investment: In Washington, D.C., the community celebrated at the March groundbreaking of a 125-bed nursing home facility financed through a partnership between union pension funds, federal housing assistance and the Peoples Involvement Corporation, a local community development organization. The AFL-CIO Housing and Investment Trust's Steve Coyle (right) was a key player.

trustee of the Carpenters Pension Trust Fund of St. Louis, which invests in mortgages of union-built single-family homes.

In recent years, other union-fund managers have begun following the building trades' example, taking a more active role in shaping their investments to ensure their money ends up at union-friendly companies. They are channeling union members' savings to companies where management's main goal is not lining its pockets but looking out for the company's long-term viability. At the same time, union-fund managers are using the power of workers' pension savings—some \$5 trillion—to create changes at companies that don't meet those tests (see box).

Investing in the future

One of the leading union-friendly investors in the United States is the Union Labor Life Insurance Company. ULLICO's Separate Account J, with more than \$1.7 billion in assets, invests exclusively in union-built real estate projects. ULLICO's Separate Account P, a private capital account, invests in smaller, nonpublicly traded companies that have pledged to partner with their workforces.

As part of ULLICO's \$5 million investment in RSI Inc., the company agreed that its nursing home facilities would be constructed with 100 percent union labor and its workforce covered by neutrality and card-check agreements. By ULLICO estimates, the agreements with RSI will result in 2.5 million hours of work for building trades union members and 2,400 union service jobs.

ULLICO and all union-fund investors focused on the future are guided by the same principle: Working families' pension fund assets must be invested for the long term in ways that respect those to whom it ultimately belongs.

"The first priority for our funds should always be a good return for our members, so that their retirement is secure," says UA President Martin Madaloni. "But there's no reason their money can't be working on their behalf in the meantime, too." @

—J. W. Mason

J.W. Mason is editor of Working Capital, the pension investment newsletter of the Center for Working Capital. For information on Working Capital, call 202-637-5179.

Standing Up for Steel

The stunning 289-141 vote by the U.S. House in March to stem the flow of illegally dumped foreign steel and save thousands of American jobs was not just a huge triumph for Steelworkers. It also clearly demonstrated the union's strategic grassroots mobilization strength.

Last fall, the USWA created a coalition with steel companies to combat steel-dumping on U.S. shores. Union members taking part in the Stand Up for Steel campaign joined in hundreds of communitywide demonstrations, rallies in Washington, D.C., and a "National Steelworkers Lobbying Day" followed by more visits to Capitol Hill involving 3,000 delegates at the Unification Conference of the UAW, IAM and USWA to gain support for the Bipartisan Steel Recovery Act. In a nationwide letter-writing campaign, USWA local unions sent hundreds of thousands of letters to Congress and the White House demanding quick action to solve the steel import crisis. When the bill passed, it received unprecedented support from a Congress made up of lawmakers who traditionally back unfettered free trade.

Rapid Response, a three-year-old USWA initiative to motivate and activate members, was a big factor in the defeat of Fast Track and has played a key role in voter registration and mobilizing members to strengthen Social Security. The union draws on a database of tens of thousands of activists to swiftly coordinate grassroots action on fast-breaking issues.

"We couldn't have won this victory with-

out the hundreds of members who lobbied in Washington and the quarter of a million letters the members wrote to protest illegal foreign dumping," says USWA President George Becker.

100,000 jobs on the line

Massive import surges—a 96 percent increase since 1997 in steel from Japan, a 314 percent hike for Taiwan and a 705 percent jump in Indonesian steel—have threatened to turn mill towns across America into ghost towns. The House bill would reduce imports to pre-crisis levels of about 20 percent of the U.S. market that existed prior to July 1997, when East Asia's financial collapse made countries desperately seek the U.S. open market for their products.

More than 10,000 steel jobs have been lost since June 1998—and if current import levels continue, Steelworkers say more than 100,000 jobs could be lost. Many steel mills are operating on short work weeks, and four steel mill bankruptcies have occurred since September. The no-layoff employment security provision of the current USWA agreement is all that keeps layoffs from escalating even higher.

Last February, USWA and several major steel companies filed complaints against countries such as France and Indonesia, saying they dump cut-to-length plate steel and provide unfair subsidies to their home producers. The move followed the Commerce Department's preliminary findings that hot-rolled steel also has been dumped here by Brazil, Japan and Russia.

"The bottom line is that unfair, illegally dumped imports cost jobs here in Pennsylvania and throughout America," says state



No dumping: Steelworkers President George Becker and Rep. Peter Visclosky (D-Ind.) joined 800 activists from 350 congressional districts on Capitol Hill in March to lobby for congressional passage of legislation that would cap the flow of unfairly subsidized foreign steel into the United States.

Sen. Robert Thompson (R), sponsor of an antidumping resolution adopted by the Pennsylvania Senate. Thompson credits the Stand Up for Steel campaign as a "powerful cause" in the fight against unfairly priced foreign steel. In a recent survey, 77 percent of Americans supported strong government action to end illegal steel dumping.

A global approach

Jay Clagg, a USWA Local 2701 member and father of three, was laid off in February when Geneva Steel in Vineyard, Utah, filed for bankruptcy. Clagg, a machine operator, notes that foreign steel pummeled the company, forcing it to stockpile unused coke. He thinks the government should take a global approach to the problem "instead of going to each country, which is a waste of time."

Becker agrees: "Only a comprehensive agreement on all steel products with all countries exporting into the U.S. market can solve the problem."

The steel crisis demonstrates a broader need to hold corporations in every nation responsible for their practices. To correct and prevent the global market's excesses, new rules—to limit capital speculation, stabilize currencies and protect workers' rights—must be made central to trade agreements and policy.

Steelworkers remain confident that with fair trade, they can compete easily with foreign steel producers. "There's no one more efficient than a U.S. steelworker," Clagg says. ☐

—David Kameras

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SECURITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

WHEN SHE WAS 15, TYRA BROWN, LIKE MOST TEENAGERS, didn't think for a second about Social Security. She was focused on her role as class president and her involvement in after-school clubs. Then her mother died, and Brown went to live with her grandmother. Both faced an uncertain financial future.

But Social Security was there for them. Brown relied on Social Security benefits for survivors of workers who die before they retire. And Brown's grandmother received Social Security's retirement benefits, which allowed her to tap into her own savings to help pay for her granddaughter's college education.

Brown, now a 20-year-old psychology student at Howard University in Washington, D.C., learned early that Social Security matters to young people. "Social Security touches millions of lives in America," she says. "It has touched mine, and it should be strong for generations to come."

As Congress debates the future of Social Security, young workers are coming to the same conclusion that workers of all ages are making: Social Security, a multigenerational family insurance program, needs to be strengthened, not replaced by risky private accounts. According to a 1998 poll conducted for the 2030 Center, a public policy organization for young adults, 68 percent of 18- to 34-year-olds agree with the statement that "Social Security can work for young people when they retire if Congress will strengthen the system's finances." Only 29 percent believe it can't work for them and should be replaced.

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE



Security: At 15, Tyra Brown learned how critical Social Security is for young people when her mother died and Social Security benefits enabled her to survive financially.

The incredible shrinking pension

Young workers face significant hurdles that affect their ability to save for retirement: Wages for young workers have been falling precipitously, fewer employers are offering pensions and young workers are concentrated in the "jobs of the future" where low pay and no pensions are the norm.

- **Lower wages:** Between 1970 and 1995, wages dropped 21 percent for workers with college degrees and 43 percent for those with some high school, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Those striking figures show how hard it is for young workers to save for retirement when they already are struggling with rising health care, housing and education costs.

- **Fewer pensions:** Young workers' access to pensions is decreasing. Fewer and fewer employers are providing workers with pensions, and young workers are the least likely to be covered by defined-benefit plans (which provide a guaranteed monthly amount). In 1993, 41 percent of young adults aged 25 to 29 got pensions, dropping from 48 percent in 1972. That contrasts with 61 percent for workers aged 50 to 54.

- **More jobs with no benefits:** Jobs of the future—in the fastest-growing industries—are even less likely to offer pension coverage. Today, many more jobs are temporary, and half of all temps are between 20 and 34 years old (see p. 10). Only 3 percent of temporary workers say they get pension coverage from their employer, according to the Economic Policy Institute. In the booming service sector, only 34 percent of workers have pensions.

Some pensions have been replaced with 401(k) plans (also called defined-contribution plans), in which workers invest part of their salary in a retirement fund, with the employer often offering matching money. However, defined-contribution plans, unlike defined-benefit pensions and Social Security, don't guarantee benefits. In fact, they shift the investment risk to individuals. Along with falling wages and fewer pensions, that makes Social Security's rock-solid guarantee more important than ever for young workers.

More than a retirement program

Young workers who see Social Security solely as a retirement plan may not value the program because retirement seems so far away. Save money for retirement? Most

PRIVATE ACCOUNTS: A BAD DEAL

Privatization proponents' favorite scare tactic is that Social Security is "going broke." It's not. Social Security can pay 100 percent of promised benefits for the next 35 years. After that—even if nothing is done—it can pay at least 70 percent of benefits. The challenge is to find ways to fix that future shortfall.

Turning Social Security over to Wall Street as a system of risky private accounts would involve raising the retirement age, cutting benefits, ending a guaranteed retirement income or creating huge new federal deficits. And privatizers don't address how they would fund the Social Security programs most vital to young workers: disability and survivors' benefits.

Privatizers are dangling before young people the dream of a plush retirement funded by the stock market. Retirement security shouldn't depend on volatile stocks that can lose value.

Switching to a system of private accounts would entail enormous transition costs—and

today's young workers would pay them. "For Generation X, not even unrealistically high stock and bond market

returns can offset the 'transition tax,'" says a new report by the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.

Risky private accounts aren't the solution. There are several *real* options for strengthening Social Security.

- **Channel the federal budget surplus** to bolster Social Security, which would ensure that 100 percent of the system's benefits can be paid until at least 2049 and would be fairer than giving more tax cuts to the rich.

- **Increase the earnings tax cap.** Workers and employers pay no Social Security taxes on income that exceeds \$72,600. A worker making \$72,600 a year pays the same Social Security payroll tax as Fortune 500 CEOs, whose average compensation was \$10.6 million in 1998. Raising the cap would help fund Social Security without cutting family benefits.

- **Bolster retirement security** by joining together in unions. Wages for union workers of all ages are higher than for nonunion workers, making it easier to save for retirement. And union members are more likely than nonunion workers to get defined-benefit pensions: 79 percent of union members are covered by these pensions compared with only 44 percent of nonunion members, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. ☐



young workers are trying to pay the rent or pay off student or car loans.

But Social Security is not just for retirees. Of the 44 million beneficiaries, 6 million are disabled workers. And a 20-year-old worker has a 3-in-10 chance of becoming disabled and unable to work for some period before reaching retirement. Social Security benefits replace most of a worker's earnings and provide benefits for the children of workers who become disabled. It's like having a \$220,000 disability insurance policy.

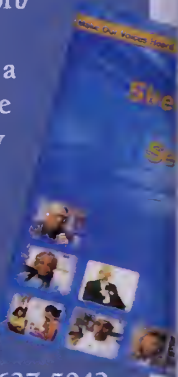
A 20-year-old worker also has a 1-in-5 chance of dying before reaching retirement. Social Security can't blunt the emotional impact of someone dying young, but it does guarantee dignity and independence for workers' surviving family members. For a widow of a 25-year-old worker with two children, Social Security replaces up to 80 percent of that worker's earnings—equivalent to a \$328,000 life insurance policy. And, like Tyra Brown, many young people get survivors' benefits when their parents die, enabling them to grow up with economic security and afford a college education. ☐

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

- The 2030 Center's policy manual, *Strengthening Social Security for Young Workers*, is available for \$4 from 1015 18th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Call 202-822-6526 or toll-free at 877-2030-ORG. It is also on the 2030 website: www.2030.org/ssreport/index.htm.

- *Strengthen Social Security*, a new eight-minute video by the AFL-CIO, is available to show at union meetings, community gatherings or anywhere working families get together. Single copies, \$7 each; 2 to 49 copies, \$5 each; 50 or more, \$3 each. Contact the AFL-CIO at 202-637-5042 or fax orders to 202-637-5058.

- Visit www.aflcio.org/socialsecurity to keep up-to-date and to get more information about other AFL-CIO materials available.





United for a Fair Economy. The 48-page book is full of cartoons, snappy comebacks, graphics and quotes that put a sardonic spin on a serious subject.

Laughing Stock includes a series of offbeat cartoons, "This Modern World," that skewers Wall Street, HMOs, health insurance companies and news coverage of working family issues. The next time someone asks, "Has there ever been a government program that works?" *Laughing Stock* readers have a ready reply: "So, I guess you'll be handing back your Social Security checks when you retire?"

All the artwork may be reproduced, with credit to the artists, for noncommercial purposes such as fliers, posters and picket signs.

Laughing Stock is available for \$5 (includes shipping and handling). Call 617-423-2148; fax: 617-423-0191; or check out UFE's website at www.stw.org. @

A Funny Look at Economics

Next time your city council member votes against a living wage, remember George Burns, who said, "Too bad all the people who know how to run this country are busy driving cabs and cutting hair."

Find Burns' comment—and dozens more like it—in *Laughing Stock: A Humor Sourcebook for Economic Fairness*, published by

KIDS FIGHT SWEATSHOPS

Students of all ages, aware that children are being exploited around the globe, are working for a sweatshop-free world. As part of a UNITE-commissioned project, 18-year-old Laura Stephens-Davidowitz designed a book cover that depicts everyday items kids use, such as sneakers, jeans and soccer balls, and includes an explanation of the dismal conditions children work under to produce them.

"There are so many struggles behind everything we own," says Stephens-Davidowitz, who lives in Alpine, N.J. "I hope this makes students aware of the issues. Students are the consumers, so we are in a good position to help the workers."

And proving that it's never too early to start fighting sweatshops, first-graders at Queen of Peace Grammar School in North Arlington, N.J., launched a letter-writing campaign that helped convince the mayor and city council to adopt a resolution banning city purchases of sweatshop goods. "These young people have stepped up as our community's conscience," says Leonard Kaiser, North Arlington mayor.

UNITE book covers are 10 cents each. To order, call 1-800-23-UNITE, ext. 821, or write UNITE Bookcovers, 1710 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10019. @



Going Mobile

When a construction site in Maryland or northern Virginia is short on trained crew, the Bricklayers' Rapid Response Training Team and its mobile training center shifts into action. Operating out of the union's national training center in Fort Ritchie, Md., the team can dispatch one of three trailers to a worksite within two weeks of a request by one of its local unions.

Once the trailer arrives on-site, the team trains apprentices in spreading mortar, laying bricks and building structures. As a result of the 12-week course, the apprentices can perform 70 percent of the jobs a bricklayer is expected to do, says Clarence Nichols, deputy director of apprenticeship training.

The team also jumps into action to handle emergencies. After an accident during construction of the Baltimore



On the job: As part of the union's mobile training center, Bricklayers provide apprenticeship training at construction sites in Maryland, Delaware and Virginia.

Ravens football stadium, the Rapid Response team conducted on-site training in safety and health.

Local unions are eligible for mobile training if at least 15 apprentices are involved and the contractors commit to hire the workers after they are trained. The team was formed in 1995 with one trailer. Today, the union's three trailers are augmented by two new 24-foot trucks in Michigan and Pennsylvania, where they are used for safety training and upgrading skills. @

A Benchmark for Justice

Judges are accustomed to dispensing justice. But what happens when they can't get justice on the job? They join a union.

That's just what a group of about 200 administrative law judges did in New York City when they joined City Employees Union Local 237, a Teamsters affiliate.

The judges—employed by the Environmental Control Board, the Taxi and Limousine Commission and the Department of Health—were classified as part-time work-

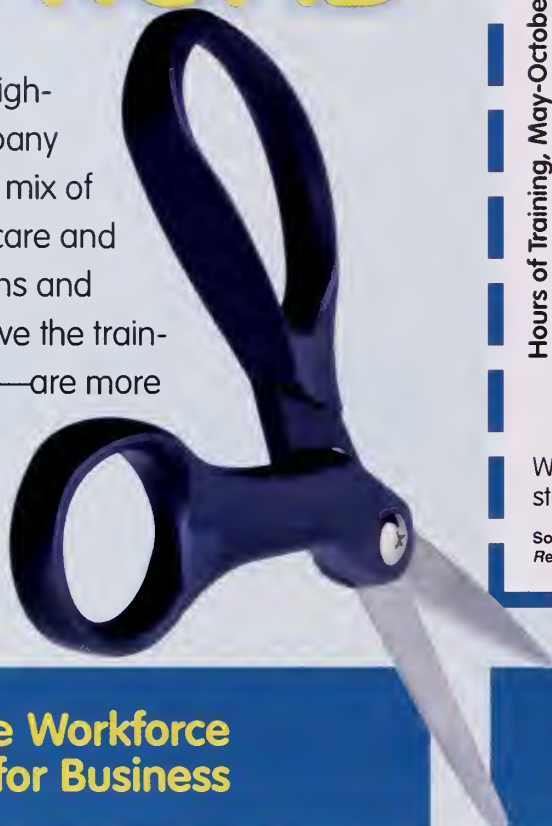
ers, even though they often work 35 hours a week. Like many other part-time employees, the judges didn't get any benefits or sick leave.

"There was a lot of arbitrariness in work assignments," says Marti Copleman, who traded in a stressful, high-profile law practice for the more flexible schedule of an administrative law judge. "Now we'll have a grievance procedure."

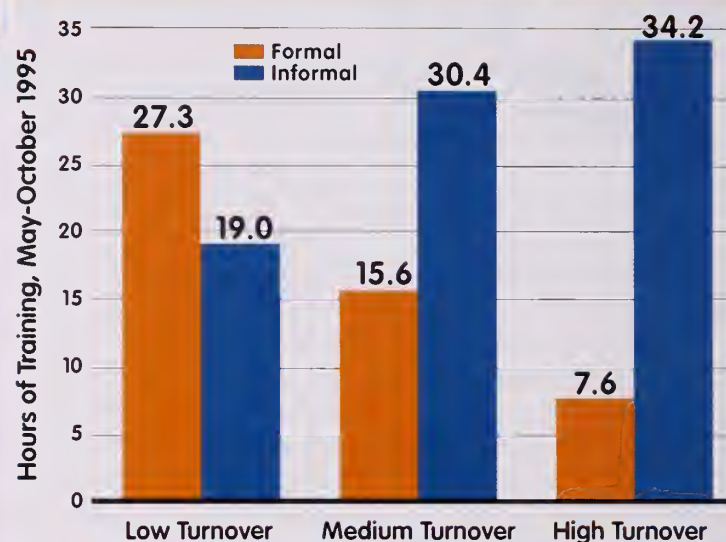
The city had argued the judges were "casual" employees and not eligible to be in a union, but the city Office of Collective Bargaining's Board of Certification disagreed. The judges now will receive the same 4.75 percent pay hike as all city employees. "Union is better," says Copleman. @

Taking the CORPORATE HIGH ROAD

Corporations that make high-road policies part of company practice—hiring a diverse mix of managers, offering child care and other family-friendly options and ensuring employees receive the training they need to advance—are more likely to see increased productivity, lower turnover and a bigger bottom line.



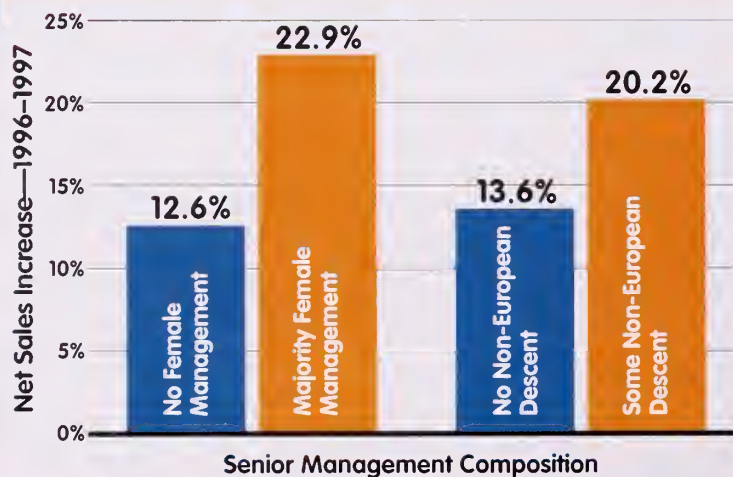
Employer-Sponsored Training Decreases Turnover



When employers provide formal job training, the result is a more stable workforce.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Report on the Amount of Formal and Informal Training Received by Employees*, December 1996.

A Diverse Workforce Is Good for Business



Companies with women and minorities in senior management positions consistently outperform companies that have a more homogeneous top tier.

Source: American Management Association and Business and Professional Women's Association, *Senior Management Teams: Profiles and Performance*, 1999.

Needed: Employer Child Care Assistance

Mothers who did not have access to a child care center within 10 minutes from home were almost twice as likely to leave their jobs as those who did.

Employer assistance with child care—through the federal Dependent Credit Assistance Plan, child care reimbursement and on-site day care—could go a long way toward decreasing job turnover.

Source: *Child Care and Employment Turnover*, 1996, by N. Collins and S.L. Hoffert, University of Michigan Press, cited in *Ahead of the Curve: Why America's Leading Employers Are Addressing the Needs of New and Expectant Parents*, by Rima Shore for the Families and Work Institute.



EVENTS

Union, City by City Conferences

Regional Union Cities Conferences scheduled for the Midwest and Northeast will bring together union leaders and activists to discuss building their councils. The meetings build on the national Union, City by City conference in Chicago last summer where more than 400 labor council leaders gathered to share strategies about how they are changing their communities through the Union Cities campaign.

Based on recommendations from participants at the Chicago conference, the regional meetings will include smaller work groups and more focused discussions led by CLC leaders, with a focus on peer training and restoring workers' right to organize.

Union, City by City Northeast Region
Cherry Hill, New Jersey, June 4–6
Contact: AFL-CIO Field Mobilization Dept., Northeast Region, 860-571-8467.

Union, City by City Midwest Region
St. Louis, June 4–6
Contact: AFL-CIO Field Mobilization Department Midwest Region, 312-492-6569.

AFL-CIO Community Services Southern Region
Orlando, Fla., June 3–5
Contact: Chris Marston, 202-637-5191 or cmarston@aflcio.org.

Workers' Voice State Federation Legislative Conference
Indianapolis, July 23–25
Contact: Barbara Smith, 202-637-5303 or bsmith@aflcio.org.


The Labor Heritage Foundation is hosting two events June 20–22 designed to strengthen the union movement by incorporating creative strategies in organizing and outreach.

At the Great Labor Arts Exchange union activists, artists and labor educators will explore ways to strengthen the union movement through songs, poetry, theater, posters, cartoons, films, websites and other media.

The Conference on Creative Organizing will offer training for union staff and activists interested in incorporating songs, chants, games and skits to boost organizing campaigns.

Both take place at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies, 10000 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, Md. 20903. For more information, contact the Labor Heritage Foundation at 202-842-7810.


Working for America Conference

The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute (formerly HRDI), formed in October 1998, is hosting a national conference June 12–15 in Las Vegas. "Strong Unions in Strong Communities: High-Road Partnerships for Working Families" will include topics such as connecting schools, skills and workplace learning. For more information, call: 202-638-3912 or 800-842-4734; fax: 202-783-6536; or e-mail: conference99@workingforamerica.org. 

MOVIES

From Coalwood to Hollywood


Homer Hickam Jr., a member of Professional and Technical Engineers Local 27 in Huntsville, Ala., is the focus of the recent

film *October Sky*. Based on Hickam's book, *Rocket Boys*, the movie recounts Hickam's lifelong passion for rockets. The son of a coal mine supervisor, he grew up in Coalwood, W.Va., where he turned his youthful experiments with creating rockets into a career at the Marshall Space Flight Center, training international crews for the space station. 


WEBSITINGS

Many websites keep an eye on Corporate America—and urge readers to action. These sites include many links for a look at the ethics of U.S. businesses.

- www.baobabcomputing.com/corporatepower—Features essays on corporate power and provides information on globalization, irresponsible companies, business ethics and the efforts of grassroots organizations to fight for a humane, sustainable economy.


- www.corporations.org/corplist.html—Organized by industrial sector, this site features links on individual companies and links to boycott lists, including the AFL-CIO's, along with information on multinational companies from Corporate Watch and Multinational Monitor. 

Rate Your Job

9to5, National Association of Working Women, is holding its annual Rate Your Job Contest: The Good, the Bad and the Downright Unbelievable. 9to5's Rate Your Job brochure includes a scorecard designed to help assess how well your employer recognizes, rewards and promotes women. All contest entrants will receive a free copy of 9to5's Workplace Negotiating Tips with practical ideas to improve the work environment. Winning entrants' stories will be publicized to help educate business leaders and policy makers about the kinds of changes working women need. Deadline for entries is Sept. 10. For a free Rate Your Job brochure, call the Job Survival Hotline at 800-522-0925 or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Rate Your Job, 9to5, 1430 W. Peachtree St., Suite 610, Atlanta, Ga. 30309 

STAND FOR CHILDREN '99

The June 1 Stand for Children Day '99 will include rallies, marches, community picnics, candidate forums, book drives and child care appreciation celebrations around the theme *Ready to Learn, Ready to Succeed*. Participants will rally around four key issues—health care, child care, challenging schools and safe after-school activities.

For more information, contact Stand for Children, 1834 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. Fax: 202-234-0217; e-mail: tellstand@stand.org; or check out the website at www.stand.org. 

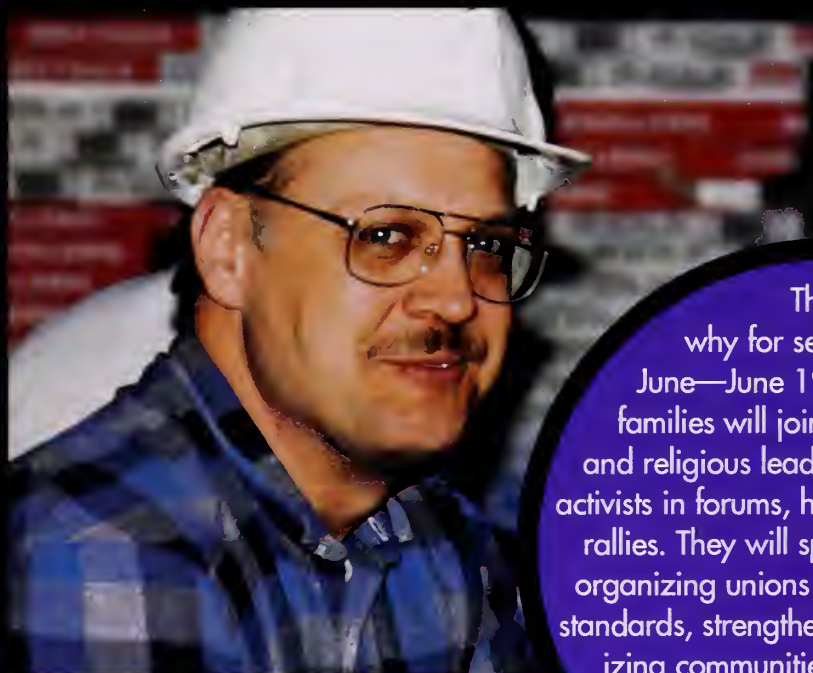
SEVEN DAYS

IN JUNE:

MAKING OUR

VOICES HEARD

Working families know that unions lift wages, improve health care and retirement security and help workers gain respect on the job and a place in today's economy. But in the 91 percent of workplaces where employers force workers to attend anti-union meetings, and in a nation where half of all employers threaten to abandon their employees by shutting down if workers choose a union, workers don't have the freedom to make their voices heard.



That's why for seven days in June—June 19–25—working families will join with community and religious leaders, lawmakers and activists in forums, hearings, marches and rallies. They will speak out about how organizing unions means raising living standards, strengthening jobs and revitalizing communities. They'll applaud employers who join with us and shine a light on employers who fight us.

We can begin to restore working people's freedom to join together with co-workers in unions to improve their lives.

For seven days in June, your union can help tell lawmakers and their communities the obstacles workers face when they try to exercise their freedom to join a union:

- **Set up forums and meetings with local and state lawmakers and members of Congress.**
- **Organize rallies and other high-profile educational events.**
- **Hold news conferences and hearings.**

To find out more and to receive an Organizing Packet with sample press release, talking points and other resource material, contact your central labor council or the AFL-CIO Field Mobilization Department in Washington, D.C., at 202-639-6225 or in Boston at 617-557-5488.



Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

JUNE 1999

America @work

A Blueprint for Organizing

LAUNCHING A NEW ALLIANCE • BUILDING TO LAST WITH LABOR 2000

IDEAS AND VIEWS FROM YOU

Say What?

What actions is your union taking to build on the momentum working families generated in the 1998 elections?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue.

America@work

815 16th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Phone: 202-637-5010

Fax: 202-508-6908

e-mail: atwork@afcio.org

Here's What You Say

ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION INVOLVES RETIREE MEMBERS IN ORGANIZING, POLITICAL WORK OR COMMUNITY ACTION:

"Frank 'Gene' Shipman...has faithfully attended most of our Open Houses for Organizing in the last three years. At our Open House, Gene gets the chance to explain to potential new members the advantages of being union and what a union pension can mean to a retiree. He is also a member of our organizing committee....In our organizing video, 15 Minutes That Could Change Your Life, Gene gives his story on what unionism and retirement mean to him....Gene also volunteers time for our annual children's Christmas party and annual picnic....

"At his retirement, Brother Shipman had 38 years of service in the Electrical Workers....I admire him greatly. If all members cared as much as Gene Shipman does, our unity and strength would be unbelievable."—Jeff Roughton, business representative, IBEW Local 68, Denver

"I RECEIVED A CALL from a staff member of a Cleveland City Council member today asking that the 21 members of the Cleveland City Council be added to our mailing list to receive America@work. He said that all kinds of organizations send council members all kinds of publications, but that they receive virtually no labor publications. He especially liked the May issue (so did I) and thought that elected officials really need to be exposed to this kind of information in this format....

"I will be happy to provide these names and addresses. My sense is to restrict it to our friends but define that relatively broadly."—Harriet Applegate, AFL-CIO field representative, Northeast Ohio

"REGARDING...2000 IN 2000..."

Wisconsin can add another one to the list. Sarah Waukau, a member of Local 36-A of AFSCME Council 40, won a special election April 6 in the 35th state Assembly District. She resigned from her job with the Langlade County Department on Aging to run for the post. She won by 216 votes in a district that had been in Republican hands since 1972."—Kevin Traas, public affairs associate, AFSCME Council 11

[Editor's note: See "Building to Win, Building to Last," on p. 16 for an update on 2000 in 2000.]

"I LOVE THE NEW FORMAT for your magazine."—Ed Cheira, Northern California Newspaper Guild/CWA Local 39052

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in America@work.

When you see
unions@work
and our
members@work
and collective power
in our
communities@work,
that's when you see

America@work

"FORTY-FIVE EMPLOYEES OF MICROPHOR INC., a subsidiary of Mo

Power Inc. [in Willits, Calif.], voted 27 to 19 in favor of Machinists District Lodge 190... turning point in the campaign was when 45 workers signed a petition and delivered to the boss, demanding that the company's captive audience meetings.

"As the election neared...the company increased hourly pay by as much as \$3.40 per hour. They purchased tools for all the machinists. They allotted \$100 per year for steel-toe boots. They raffled off \$400 worth of groceries on Election Day. None of this had enough effect to sway the majority of workers, who knew from past experience not to trust the company. They wanted a union contract."—Michael Muñoz, organizer, IAM District Lodge 190, Oakland, Calif.

"ON APRIL 8, THE NORTHAMPTON COUNTY (PA.) COUNCIL passed a right-

to-organize resolution by a vote of 9-0. The resolution originated with the local chapter of the Labor Party and was introduced and defended by Councilman (and LP member) Joe Brennan. The resolution was adapted from one recently passed by the Boston City Council, as reported in America@work (January 1999)."—Gary Olson, National Writers Union/UAW 1981, Bethlehem, Pa.

America@work

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8

A BLUEPRINT FOR ORGANIZING

Building trades unions are mapping out plans that would expand the successful multitrades organizing project in Las Vegas—where membership grew by 35 percent in two years

12

LAUNCHING A NEW ALLIANCE

Over the last three years, the union movement has developed grassroots strategies for mobilizing and organizing—and the AFL-CIO Executive Council's Committee 2000 is taking those efforts to the next step, by seeking ways to create a stronger, more unified union movement

14

CHILD CARE TEACHERS ORGANIZE

Worker-organizers in Seattle and Philadelphia are heading up the battle to end low wages and high turnover for child care workers

16

LABOR 2000: BUILDING TO WIN, BUILDING TO LAST

Working families already are expanding on the grassroots momentum they generated in Labor '98—and on the coast-to-coast success that put working family issues at the forefront

4 CURRENTS

Teamsters on the road to a first contract

Building trades milestones

19 LIKE IT IS

Renewing America's commitment to equal education

20 HEART OF THE MOVEMENT

Standing up for what's right

21 OUT THERE

UAW member: the real million-dollar man

A capitol education

Commemorating César Chávez

22 SHOPTALK

Stewards: front-line union advocates

23 HOMEPAGE

Bill Lucy featured in art exhibit

Woody Guthrie on tour

Michael Moore produces "The Awful Truth"



14

Ask A Working Woman Forums Seek Input

More than 1,200 working women, including a panel of five union workers and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, gathered in Buffalo, N.Y., last month to discuss equal pay, child care, Social Security and health care as part of an AFL-CIO Ask A Working Woman event.

Social Security and equal pay were among the topics participants raised most frequently.

"Some people say you should save for your own retirement. I'd like these people to live on \$6 an hour and pay rent, buy food and pay utilities and see how much is left over," Clinton said. "It's why the president and the

administration have committed again to making equal pay a real priority."

The Buffalo event was the first in a series of forums the AFL-CIO Working Women's Department is holding with working women opinion leaders, policy experts and elected officials. The federation and its affiliates and dozens of women's, community, religious and civil rights groups also are distributing hundreds of thousands of Ask A Working Woman surveys to gauge the issues most important to working women. The findings will be presented at the Working Women's Conference 2000 in Chicago next March. ☐



Hillary Rodham Clinton joins participants in an AFL-CIO Ask A Working Woman forum.

JAMES MCCOY/BUFFALO NEWS

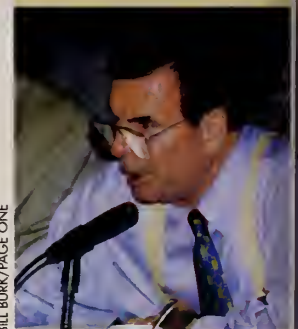
Looking at Organizing Strategies

Citing the decline in recent years of union representation in industries and geographic areas, the AFL-CIO Executive Council vowed to "build and change the American labor movement and...to increase resources committed to organizing and to target those resources in strategic ways."

Meeting last month in Washington, D.C., the council issued a statement on Organizing Priorities and Strategies that speaks to how efforts to help workers organize can best be targeted to build power for workers within their industries and occupations. The council also urged all national unions to adopt "change to organize" programs and to move significant resources into organizing and previewed plans for an upcoming campaign championing workers' freedom to join a union.

Retiring Sheet Metal Workers President Arthur Moore and former Teamsters President Ron Carey were honored for their service, and current IBT President James P. Hoffa was seated on the council. ☐

Council action: AFSCME President Gerald McEntee addresses the May Executive Council meeting.



BILL BURK/PAGE ONE

Mourn for the Dead, Fight for the Living

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney joined 2,000 Avondale shipyard employees and supporters at Workers Memorial Day April 28 activities in New Orleans. The death rate for workers at Avondale is three times higher than at the average shipyard with major Navy contracts.

"The eyes of the world are on Avondale shipyard and the U.S. Navy, and our message to each of them is the same: You cannot escape responsibility for broken laws or broken lives," Sweeney told the crowd. For more than five years, Avondale has been thwarting workers' efforts to form a union to gain a voice in improving shipyard safety. The federal Occupational Safety and Health

Administration recently fined the company \$537,000 for hundreds of violations.

Across the nation, workers and community activists held more than 150 events, including rallies, meetings with lawmakers, candlelight vigils and prayer services to pay tribute to those who have died on the job and renew the fight for safe workplaces.



CHERYL GERBER

UNIONS BITE BACK

Calling for "a fair share for working families"—good schools, accessible health care, affordable transportation and pay raises for city workers who have had their wages frozen for two years—nearly 50,000 union members and their supporters rallied in New York City in May. In one of the biggest union turnouts in years, working families blasted Gov. George Pataki's and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's proposals to slash vital spending programs in the face of a \$2 billion budget surplus for the city and a \$3 billion state budget surplus.

"You work too hard not to get your fair share," says Denis Hughes, New York State AFL-CIO president. "With all the money being made on Wall Street, with all the money this city and this state has in reserve, now is the time to invest in the future of our state."

The massive May 12 demonstration built on an 11-city "day of action" on March 30, spearheaded by the state federation. Thousands of union members and allies distributed leaflets protesting cuts in education, transportation and health care services that would harm work-

On the Road to a First Contract

Teamsters are revving up the campaign to get a nationwide contract with Overnite Trucking following a nine-month break in negotiations.

"The very fact that I have appointed three international vice presidents to this committee should signal to Overnite, in the clearest terms possible, the

importance I place on these negotiations," says IBT President James P. Hoffa. "Our members have gone long enough without a contract."

Since 1994, 3,650 Overnite drivers and dock workers at 43 terminals across the country have signed up with the Teamsters—yet the company repeatedly has stalled negotiations,



TEAMSTERS

Pedal to the metal: Teamsters are revving up the campaign for a nationwide contract with Overnite Trucking.

provide back pay, begin bargaining at several terminals and rescind unfair policies. And in April, the National Labor Rela-

tions Board overturned decertification petitions filed at seven Overnite terminals, which the IBT says were filed with management's involvement. ☐

union leaders say. In April 1998, for instance, an administrative law judge found Overnite committed a long list of violations and ordered the company to

REPETITIVE MOTION INJURIES INCREASING

A recent Communications Workers ergonomics survey found that hand and wrist pain among the union's members who use computers has jumped from 45 percent in 1989 to 76 percent in 1998, and workers reported a fourfold increase in repetitive motion injuries during that same time period. The 1998 survey of more than 10,000 service representatives, directory assistance operators

and technicians shows many workers are not being provided with ergonomically designed work surfaces or computer equipment, says David LeGrande, CWA occupational safety and health director.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has nearly finalized the nation's first ergonomics standard, but it could be delayed for up to two years by Republican-sponsored legislation in Congress, says LeGrande. The proposed measure would prevent OSHA from releasing the standard until Congress hears the results of a National Academy of Science study on repetitive motion injuries. ☐

SPOTLIGHT

Workers Gain a Living Wage

Together with their unions and communities, working families in Cambridge and Somerville, Mass., and Miami-Dade County, Fla., successfully campaigned for a chance to lift their families out of poverty: In May, local lawmakers in all three cities unanimously approved living wage ordinances.

Mark Sutherland of Carpenters Local 40 in Cambridge says bimonthly meetings with coalition partners were instrumental in developing the new wage law, setting recruitment and lobbying strategies and planning several successful public events. The year-and-a-half effort paid off when the Cambridge City Council voted 9-0 to set a \$10 hourly wage—one of the nation's top living wages—that contractors doing \$10,000 or more per year in business with the city must pay their workers.

The Somerville law, passed May 13, boosts wages to \$8.35 for workers on all city contracts over \$50,000; the law will apply to all city contracts over \$10,000 after three years.

In Florida, working people won their two-year fight "because women and men throughout the community—the Archdiocese of Miami, the Human Services Coalition, the Gray Panthers, the NAACP, the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center and many, many more—all joined together with the South Florida AFL-CIO to fight for what they know is right," says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, who testified at the county commission before it passed the bill by 12-0. The Miami-Dade ordinance mandates an \$8.56 hourly wage plus health benefits for county and county contractors.

These two communities join the more than two dozen cities and counties where worker-community groups have waged successful living wage campaigns. ☐



BRIAN OZEGOVICH

Victory: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson joins Miami union and community activists to celebrate passage of a living wage.

IN THE BIG APPLE

ing families. The mobilization spanned the state, including New York City, Albany, Buffalo and Ithaca, where the daughter of one young protester held up a sign reading, "Why do you hate my Grandma? Pataki Budget Cuts Her Medicaid."

The state federation has set up a toll-free number for New Yorkers to call the governor and state legislators and voice their opposition to the cuts. ☐

Fair share: Union members took a working families' message to New York lawmakers in a 50,000-strong demonstration.



FINN FOWS

Flying Home With a First Contract

The nation's only unionized offshore helicopter pilots ratified a first contract in April that provides a 35 percent wage increase and other improvements for the 208 pilots, members of Office and Professional Employees Local 107. The Lafayette, La.-based OPEIU members work for Offshore Logistics Inc. and provide services for the offshore oil industry in the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska. "This contract is the result of the dedication of our members," says Local 107 President Jim Morgan (right). "We achieved our goal of fair pay, improved health insurance, retirement security and dignity and respect on the job."



THE KAMBER GROUP

Bargaining for Working Families' Future

As child care increasingly becomes a key bargaining issue, unions that already have negotiated successful family-friendly programs can be an invaluable source of information. In San Diego, leaders from UAW, Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees and other unions recently attended the annual conference of the corporate-sponsored Alliance of Work/Family Professionals, where they agreed to set up a regular forum for working families to discuss their experiences and strategize for the future.

At the meeting, UAW representatives from a DaimlerChrysler plant in Huntsville, Ala., explained how they established their long-running child care facility. The 30,000-square-foot center, launched in the 1980s, now serves 242 children whose parents work at the plant or attend the adjoining training facility. And the 52-member staff, all UAW members, receive wages and benefits well above the industry average.

For more information, visit the AFL-CIO website at www.aflcio.org/women or the Labor Project for Working Families' website, socrates.berkeley.edu/~iir/workfam/home.html or call the Labor Project at 510-643-6814. ☐

Role model: The UAW's union-negotiated child care center in Alabama provides a model for unions bargaining family-friendly contracts.



TERRI GRAY

The unions of the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department are building a re-energized movement and expanding multitrades organizing and seeking to develop coalitions that will add to the unions' political clout. "To build our unions, we've got to build bridges to civic and community groups that can help us reach out to the new workforce," BCTD President Robert Georgine told the 2,500 delegates to the department's annual National Conference in Washington, D.C., this past April.

Under the conference theme "Milestones: Building Power," construction trades leaders discussed expanding the Las Vegas multitrades organizing campaign to Seattle and other areas (see story, p. 8). With the faces and voices at construction sites becoming more diverse every day, Georgine said, "it is up to us to welcome them no matter who they are or where they come from." ☐

"A Floating Version of NAFTA"

In port communities around the world, ships fly the flags of foreign countries, while their registries may be located in an office suite in the United States. These are flag-of-convenience (FOC) ships, which carry much of the world's freight. Every year, hundreds of their penniless crew members are stranded in foreign ports because the ships are abandoned by bankrupt owners. Hundreds more ship crews risk their lives on decrepit, badly equipped vessels.

"Runaway-flag shipping is a floating version of NAFTA or Fast Track," says Don Thornton, a Seafarers International Transport Workers Federation inspector.

The ITF's museum exhibition ship, *Global Mariner*, is now on an 18-month voyage to ports around the world, showing visitors graphic depictions of unsanitary conditions, contaminated food and dangerously defective vessels.

The ITF's campaign against FOCs is paying off. Since 1993, the number of ships covered under ITF agreements, which set minimum work and safety standards, has more than doubled. The group also has joined with the AFL-CIO Maritime Trades Department to call for legislation redefining the responsibilities of nations that have failed to monitor the abuses taking place within their registries. For more information, visit www.itf-ship.org. ☐

9,200 Shipworkers Strike for Fairness

More than 800 striking workers joined Steelworkers President George Becker at an April 21 rally in Washington, D.C., to seek congressional support for a fair contract at Newport News Shipbuilding in Virginia. The 9,200 workers struck the shipyard April 5 after working without a raise since 1993. Newport News CEO William Frick's pay has risen 250 percent since 1993, to \$1.23 million last year. In 1995, workers agreed to major wage and benefit concessions to help Newport News out of financial trouble. Last year, the shipbuilding giant made \$255 million on Navy contracts—funded by taxpayer dollars. ☐

A Boatload of Organizing

Using “port power and political panache,” the Longshore and Warehouse Union is packing up organizing victories in cities along the West Coast. Since 1997, when ILWU members voted to step up their organizing efforts, the union has used its strength in the longshore industry to organize other maritime sectors, launching campaigns among tugboat employees and workers

in warehouse and container firms, says ILWU Organizing Director Peter Olney. ILWU recently won an election for a unit at General Petroleum, a fueling operation for tankers and containers, and hopes to build on that victory among the 200 GP employees along the West Coast.

The ILWU also is expanding its inland organizing efforts. In April, 360 workers at Powell’s Bookstore in Portland, Ore., joined the ILWU after garnering support from unions, local lawmakers and bibliophiles nationwide. Meager pay increases and management’s unilateral job restructuring at the giant store spurred the clerks into action. Also in April, bike messengers seeking to join the ILWU rallied in San Francisco, where Mayor Willie Brown joined them in calling for respect on the job. The messengers have filed a request for a union election with the National Labor Relations Board, seeking a voice to redress low wages and hazardous working conditions. ☐



Rolling: San Francisco bike messengers are among the latest workers seeking to join the ILWU.

DAVID BACON

Stitching Together a Tribute

It’s been four years since a powerful homemade bomb destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people, including small children and 58 members of several AFGE locals.

To honor those killed, AFGE members from around the country created a 12-foot-by-15 foot handmade quilt. When joined together, the individual squares replicate the United States flag.

The quilt goes on display June 20 at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Silver Spring, Md., and AFGE hopes it will become a permanent part of the memorial now under construction on the site of the Murrah building.

Despite calls for major security improvements for federal buildings in the wake of the blast, AFGE notes many have yet to be implemented. Union leaders point to the newly opened Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, D.C., which, according to a *Washington Post* investigation, is vulnerable to terrorist attacks. ☐



In memoriam: AFGE members created a lasting tribute.

AFGE

OUT FRONT

June 19–25 our unions will redouble our effort to tell America the truth about what happens when workers exercise their freedom to choose a union. As you get ready for your 7 Days in June activities, here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Three-quarters of Americans believe workers deserve strong legal protection when they choose to join a union.

2. But fewer than one-third know that employers routinely attempt to intimidate workers out of making that choice. So we have to let our neighbors, fellow congregation members and local consumers know when workers are trying to organize a union to improve their lives. Then we have to let them know when an employer is waging a war to deny workers their right to make their own decision about forming a union. And to make workers’ desire to join unions visible, we have to organize more.

3. Face it: Most people who don’t have the benefit of union membership aren’t aware of what it means to working families. They have to hear about the “union advantage” in pay and benefits, in having a voice on the job, in workplace productivity and in the improved standard of living union wages can mean to an entire community. We’ve got to spread the word.

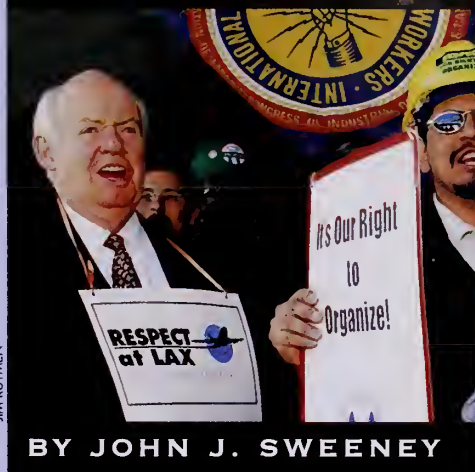
4. Like all our work on behalf of working families, the 7 Days in June is *not about us*. Winning or losing an organizing campaign is not an ego issue for union leaders—it’s a bread-and-butter issue for the workers seeking a voice on the job. It’s workers who have the most to gain and lose as they struggle to organize, and they must be the ones carrying the message to community leaders, elected officials and the media.

5. Community leaders will help workers if they feel a direct connection. A priest, rabbi or preacher whose own congregants’ jobs are being threatened is a powerful moral voice for workers. A community group whose members are being discriminated against or injured at work can help turn a local campaign into a movement. But we can’t turn to these people only when we need help; unions have to be a vital part of our communities every day.

6. Working families elected the political leaders in office today. Now it’s time for accountability. Will they stand with workers when an employer threatens to shut down or move work overseas if employees choose a union? Will they march with workers when a company refuses to recognize the majority will of employees? Will they face an employer who refuses to bargain? A major part of the 7 Days in June for all of us will be getting very public answers to these questions.

7. Finally, as we know, workers’ struggles don’t end with a vote to join a union. Let’s press during June 19–25 for contract provisions that ensure other workers won’t have to face a war when they choose to become union members. ☐

7 Points for 7 Days in June



JIM RUYMEN

BY JOHN J. SWEENEY



A large yellow Liebherr tower crane stands prominently on the left side of the image. The crane's lattice structure is clearly visible, and the name 'LIEBHERR' is printed on its side. In the background, the skeletal frame of a building under construction is visible, with numerous vertical and horizontal rebar rods protruding from the concrete structure. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

A

ll across the union movement, unions are tackling the problem of low or falling membership in their industries—and the difficulties that presents for winning improvements for workers. Nowhere is the problem more acute than in the construction industry, where union density dropped by half in 30 years. The Building and Construction Trades knew reversing that trend and rebuilding construction union strength would take a tough, big response. Today, they're working together to make it happen.

A Blueprint

The key, they're finding, may be multitrade organizing, an ambitious plan to organize construction workers—from brick masons to carpenters to laborers to plumbers—in an entire market through a joint campaign by all 15 of the building trades unions. In early 1997, the building trades launched a pilot organizing

campaign in Las Vegas, BTOP (Building Trades Organizing Project). Two years later, membership in building and construction trade unions in Las Vegas is up by 7,000—35 percent. And while unions say they learned a lot that can improve future efforts, increased membership already has brought about better results at the bargaining table and the ballot box, according to Bob Ozinga, the Las Vegas BTOP organizing director. So far, more than 300 new Las Vegas contractors and subcontractors have signed collective bargaining agreements.

And as membership increases, union political influence grows. In the 1998 elections, Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.) was re-elected by 5,000 votes, a margin he said resulted from the building trades support and the unions' returned strength in numbers.

The union difference

Julio Garcia knows the difference a stronger union movement makes. Now a member of Plasterers' and Cement Masons' Local 797, Garcia is earning more than \$23 an hour, \$6 more in pay and \$7 more in benefits than he made working the

same job for a nonunion company. The money is a big help in supporting his family; he has two young children and one on the way. But Garcia says the most important thing about belonging to a union is that "they appreciate what you do."

"When you work nonunion, they treat us like animals. When you work union, they treat us the way we ought to be treated."

This past July, Garcia, 22, and his two brothers were among 130 workers who walked out to protest nonunion Kukurin Concrete's unfair labor practices. When some of his co-workers returned to work, Garcia refused. "I wanted to go union. I told them I would make this company go union by myself." He volunteered to work 18 hours a day to organize. He even brought his children, now 3 years old and 10 months old, to the job site, hoping that one day they would understand how important having a union is in their lives. Now working for a union firm, Lehrer McGovern Bovis, Garcia says, "Whatever I lost during the strike, I won back when I got the chance to join the union."

A strategic partnership

With many distinct unions representing two or more trades and a highly skilled workforce, the construction industry is complex and diverse, says Robert Georgine, president of the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department. It is not unusual for 20 contractors and subcontractors to work on one construction site.

"Construction workers constantly find themselves working in close proximity to and needing to communi-

cate with workers from other trades," Georgine says. "The rationale for multitrade organizing is therefore both practical and strategic: Practical, because multitrade organizing reflects what our industry looks like in the field; strategic, because it allows us to organize on a scale to win."

Multitrade organizing promotes solidarity and that, in turn, helps unions increase political and collective bargaining influence and stimulates organizing training, says Laborers President Arthur Coia. When unions are solid and united, combining their resources for a common goal, nonunion workers and contractors "see we mean business," he says. Employers and politicians understand they are dealing with many unions united in a common cause.

Unions also learn successful strategies from each other in multitrade organizing campaigns, says Coia, who co-chairs the AFL-CIO's Organizing Committee.

Iron Workers President Jake West says projects like the one in Las Vegas are

Worker-organizers: From the start, workers have been key to the success of the building trades multunion organizing campaign in Las Vegas.



DAVID BACON

nt for Organizing

BY JAMES B. PARKS



“damned important” to the labor movement. “There’s not another group of unions organizing this way. You have 15 different unions with a common cause. This is the best opportunity to get all the building trades unions working together.”

Changing to organize

In the 1960s, more than 40 percent of the construction industry was union. Today, building trades unions represent 17.8 percent of the workforce. The decline resulted from several factors. Periodic recessions intensified competition and enabled nonunion operations to secure footholds in traditionally strong union markets. In many of the recent construction recessions, building trades unions lost one out of three jobs; in the recoveries that followed, they gained one out of nine new jobs.

The construction unions also suffered because of the hostile legal and political environment that made it easier for companies to “double-breast” (in which companies with a union contract create a nonunion subsidiary to avoid hiring union workers) or to abandon union contracts altogether.

Corporations shifted construction work from the more densely organized Northeast to the less-unionized South and Southwest, where many states have so-called right-to-work laws. At the same time, large corporate construction clients launched a successful “open shop” movement that weakened union influence.

To combat these forces, building trades unions began to emphasize organizing and to remove internal barriers to organizing. More than some 150,000 members were trained over 10 years through the COMET (Construction Organizing Membership Education Training) program, launched by the Electrical Workers in 1988. COMET

demonstrates to rank-and-file construction workers the importance and benefits of organizing to build membership support for and participation in organizing.

Armed with the knowledge of organizing’s importance, COMET participants returned to their locals and formed a nucleus of support for changing to organize. Unions experimented with diverse organizing tactics. As a result, building trades membership rose by 86,000 in 1996 and 73,000 in 1997, an increase of 9.5 percent and 7.3 percent, respectively. With an increase in total construction employment factored in, union density rose 0.8 percent in 1996 and 0.1 percent in 1997.

A history of working together

In the 1890s, the Carpenters led the movement for the eight-hour day, but all the construction unions were involved, says Jeff Grabelsky, director of the Cornell University Construction Industry Program. The latest move toward multi-trade organizing began in the 1980s, he adds, because individual unions rediscovered they could not affect standards or gain significant membership by organizing one employer at a time.

With 4 million construction workers still unorganized in the early 1990s, the building trades recognized the need to step up their tactics. In an open shop

environment, organizing one site at a time was not producing enough results to stem the decline in market density. When one shop was organized and a collective bargaining agreement signed, its nonunion competitors, which paid lower wages and provided few benefits, would bid lower and get the contracts.

One solution was Las Vegas BTOP. This is not a new idea in building trades organizing, says Grabelsky. Although individual unions organized within their own crafts, the most dramatic gains in membership have occurred when construction unions organized across an industry.

Multitrade organizing works

By the 1990s, the famous Las Vegas Strip was booming. Casinos, hotels and new homes were sprouting up across the city, increasing demand for skilled labor. Building on the strong construction trades presence in the city and good labor-management relations, BTOP launched a large and visible organizing campaign that garnered strong support from the local construction unions and the community. About 65 organizers—20 from the building trades international unions, 10 from the BCTD and 30 to 35 from local unions—worked up to 15 hours a day, contacting the nonunion workers on the job at dawn or during house calls at night. The face-to-face contact allowed the organizers to establish credibility and create a bond with

workers. Each worker’s name was placed in a database for education and mobilization.

Organizers learned, Ozinga says, that nonunion workers were as concerned about dignity on the job as bread-and-butter issues of pay and benefits. “These guys wanted basic justice, wanting to feel respected, to feel that they count, that they are valued as human beings.”

Workers began to mobilize. By mid-1998, hundreds of unorganized commercial and residential concrete

“Multitrade organizing is both practical and strategic: Practical, because multitrade organizing reflects what our industry looks like in the field; strategic, because it allows us to organize on a scale to win.”

—Robert Georgine, president, AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department

workers were demonstrating against unfair labor practices and unfair working conditions and were demanding their right to organize. Simultaneously, unorganized roofers and concrete workers began organizing in their shops. In June, the workers started to strike. "That really shook the industry. Traditionally, companies associated strikes with unions, and here you have unorganized workers walking out," Ozinga says. By July, 500 nonunion construction workers were on strike.

The workers decided to escalate the fight and began holding rallies and candlelight vigils to dramatize their plight. Local religious leaders joined the pickets. Then the workers decided to hold sit-downs at the worksites. This led to civil disobedience and arrests, but it got the companies' attention. Some of those employers now have signed collective bargaining agreements, while others significantly have diminished their presence in the market, he says.

To Mike Sullivan, president of the Sheet Metal Workers, BTOP demonstrates how crucial multi-trade organizing is to success. "Organizing is the foundation of our union. Projects like BTOP develop relationships between the crafts for a common goal," he says.

Mike Monroe, president of the Painters and Allied Trades, agrees. "You can't maintain any of your programs if you don't orga-

nize," he says. "The trades are so dependent on each other on a job, it was a natural move to join together to organize."

Several key lessons can be learned from the BTOP experience, Ozinga says. First, a successful drive must be based in the workforce. Although the organizers planted the seeds, the workers set the tone and drove the actions that led to recognition.

Second, the campaign must include all the building trades unions. The trades and the work they do are so connected that one union cannot organize workers without affecting the others. Last, a strategic effort must be marketwide, not one employer at a time. "There are over 200,000 contractors in the United States; most of them are small, employing 10 to 20 people. You can't organize them one by one," he says.

Building on multitrade action

In the year ahead, multitrade organizing will move to other areas. Washington State, with its active Trade Organizers of Puget Sound (TOPS), is a possibility. The Seattle-area council has embraced the "Milestones to Organizing" program, a systematic approach developed by the

Milestones to Multitrade Organizing

Multitrade organizing requires a significant commitment by local building and construction trades unions. The AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department has developed *Milestones to Organizing*, a guide that outlines four levels of action that lead a local building trades council from its initial commitment to organize to the launching of a campaign such as the Las Vegas organizing drive. Briefly, these steps are:

Lay the foundation

- Create a detailed profile of local organizing.
- Define targeted submarkets.
- Resolve commitment to multitrade, marketwide workforce organizing as top priority.
- Describe efforts to identify and dismantle internal obstacles to organizing.

Build an infrastructure

- Establish a fund exclusively devoted to organizing and equal to about 30 percent of the total operating budget.
- Develop a written plan and

timetable for educating, activating and mobilizing union members.

Launch a campaign

- Reach membership mobilization goals.
- Achieve financial goal for organizing fund.
- Designate local organizers assigned full time to campaign.

Establish an organizing council

- Demonstrate long-term political and financial commitment to construction organizing and initiate major marketwide campaign.

Building trades councils may request a copy of *Milestones to Organizing* from Building Trades Organizing Director Stephen Lerner at 202-347-1461. @



Signing up: Seeking respect on the job, construction trades workers are joining unions throughout Las Vegas.

BCTD for local building trades councils to plan and implement multitrade, marketwide workforce organizing campaigns.

To accomplish these goals, local unions prepare for organizing by educating workers about the need to organize, researching the economic structure of the local construction market and understanding important job site issues for nonunion workers.

Pointing to a \$300,000 fund established for organizing, Jack Gilchrist, executive secretary of the Seattle-King County Building Trades Council, says the local unions are committed to organizing. All the TOPS members, including Gilchrist, volunteer to work as organizers. "If union leadership shows it's committed to organizing, others will follow," he says.

The commitment is showing progress. About 1,000 workers have signed pledge cards to help organize. "The rank and file is revved up and ready to go," Gilchrist says, and adds that volunteers have contacted more than 600 nonunion workers.

Seattle is in the midst of a construction boom. "This boom is expected to last five to 10 years. If you don't use these years to organize, the contractors will take us out. I look at this as live or die."

As West says, "If we don't organize, we're going out of business. If we have a concentrated effort, it will have a bearing on our membership. Organizing is our future." @

LAUNCHING A NEW ALLIANCE

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

Michele Davis, an AFSCME organizer, is working to help nurses at Cleveland's Metro Hospital win a voice on the job. She's getting valuable assistance from her international union, but also from other local unions in Cleveland, thanks to the Cleveland Central Labor Council, which coordinates union support for organizing. "When you are involved with a labor council, you have access to the expertise and assistance of a great many people," Davis says, noting that the labor council, through the AFL-CIO Union Cities initiative, brings together unions and community allies. "You have a group that is unified, knows how to come together and can think strategically about mobilizing resources for campaigns," she says.



Celebration: Teamsters Vice President Carroll Haynes, Tennessee State Federation President James Neeley, CLUW President Gloria Johnson and TWU President Sonny Hall joined a victory celebration in Nashville with 1,240 locked-out UAW workers who signed a pact with Peterbilt Motors in November.

Davis was one of dozens of union activists who recently met with members of the AFL-CIO Executive Council's Committee 2000 and other council members. Committee 2000 has spent the past eight months visiting state federations and central labor councils around the country to get a first-hand look at successful strategies such as those used in Cleveland. The committee is made up of more than 20 members of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, as well as representatives from state federations and central labor councils. As part of their outreach efforts, committee members bolstered their site visits with surveys of labor councils and state federations and discussions with union leaders at conference forums. Over the last three years, the union movement has sought to develop grassroots strategies for mobilizing and organizing through initiatives such as Union Summer and Street Heat. Committee 2000's goal is to take those efforts to the next step by finding ways to create a stronger, more unified union movement.

"We asked three questions," says Machinists President Tom Buffenbarger, who chairs the state and local central bodies committee of the AFL-CIO Executive Council. "What works, what doesn't and what needs to be changed for the future."

Starting at the grassroots

Meeting with union leaders, Committee 2000 members saw several principles emerge: Working families win victories in organizing and politics when state federations and central labor councils are unified, have clear roles, support common goals and can bring together many affiliates as well as groups outside the union movement. By visiting large and small state federations and central labor councils, the committee observed how important adequate resources are to creating comprehensive and effective outreach efforts.

Participation in state federations and central labor councils varies considerably from union to union. That means labor councils and state federations often don't have the resources they need to engage in effective political action and to support important organizing and mobilization by local and international unions. With union density at a low level in many industries and in many geographic areas, strategically directed resources are critical to maintaining and building the strength needed to ensure a voice for working families on the job and in their communities.

In addition, decisions affecting working families increasingly are being made by state and local officials—and Committee 2000 members saw the extent to which central labor councils and state federations must increase their involvement in local grassroots action.

"Local political elections are often more important to our union than a national election because the local candidates control the school boards, the city politics, city work and most of the jobs in the construction industry," says James Marshall, business manager of Sheet Metal Workers Local 85 in Atlanta. Marshall met with Committee 2000 members when they visited Atlanta in May. As Michael Goodwin, Office and Professional Employees president, puts it, "It was amazing to see how a labor council in Atlanta, with a 6 percent union density, could leverage that into the political power it takes to win elections."

Working together to win

When all union organizations join together, working families can win more victories, such as:

- Beating corporate attempts to silence working families' voices in California. Last year, out-of-state millionaires put Proposition 226, a "paycheck deception" initiative, on the California ballot. The measure would have required union members to sign permission slips each year before their dues could be used for political or legislative activities. The state federation, central labor councils and local unions from throughout the Golden State, supported by their international unions, came together to make hundreds of thousands of phone calls, walk precincts and visit union members at their workplaces. The result: a resounding defeat of Proposition 226—and revitalization of grassroots political energy that swept elected officials friendly to working families into state office five months later.

- Enacting a collective bargaining law for Maryland public employees. "The governor's race and the collective bargaining bill were really team efforts," involving affiliates, the state federation and central labor councils, says Morty Bahr, CWA president. "The central labor council set the tone for us and the union picked it up," adds Loretta Johnson of AFT Local 340. "The strength of all the unions coming together proved that we can be a united force in the state."

- Winning the 1998 state minimum wage ballot initiative in Washington. "The locals, the central labor councils and the state federation worked as a team," says Rick Bender, president of the Washington State Labor Council. For instance, several labor council officers are on the state federation's executive council. "It keeps them in touch and they are part of the decision-making process," says Bender.

- Preventing Sunbeam Electronics in Cleveland from shutting down. The Cleveland Central Labor Council was instru-

mental in pulling union members together to keep Sunbeam open, says Seth Rosen, Midwest organizing director for the Communications Workers. "We're all united to fight for workers' rights," Rosen says. "Labor councils in cities like Cleveland do an incredible job supporting our organizing program and changing the climate for workers to organize."

Building on success

To help replicate the successes they saw, Committee 2000 is considering a proposal aimed at building local and state union movements that can address working family issues and create an environment that supports workers' freedom to choose a union to give them a voice at the workplace. The elements of a "New Alliance" can put these principles into action:

1. Defining the roles of state federations and central labor councils so every type of union organization can most effectively take part in and benefit from a common and integrated set of goals.

2. Planning and budgeting on a two-year cycle to ensure a studied focus on those goals. The plans and budgets of state federations and key central labor councils would be reviewed by the national AFL-CIO.

3. Educating and training leaders and staff at the state and local level to enhance their skills and knowledge to implement programs that give working families a more effective voice in their workplaces and communities.

4. Streamlining communications by wiring state and local bodies to the latest technology in computers and telecommunications.

5. Evaluating how well state federations and central labor councils are meeting their goals. Local unions, state federations, central labor councils, national unions and the AFL-CIO together establish performance standards that will help determine state federations' and labor councils' eligibility for the New Alliance program.

6. Re-mapping the structures and defining relationships between central labor councils, state federations and local unions on a state-by-state basis.

7. Encouraging local unions to participate fully in their state federations and key local bodies by having national unions guarantee payment of per capita tax to quali-



On the road: IAM President Thomas Buffenberger talks with union members in Nashville, Tenn.



Sharing information: In April, Baltimore Central Labor Council President Ernest Grecco, Mayor Kurt Schmoke and Committee 2000 members heard about CWA Local 200's winning campaign at the city's community colleges, UFCW Local 27's victories at several retail stores and a string of wins by SEIU 119E-DC at health care facilities.

fying state federations and key central labor councils until all locals can pay an equitable share of the budget of state federations and key central labor councils in proportion to their membership.

"When you combine our urgent need to organize with the realities of our new economy and more political decision making at the state and local level, the role of central labor councils and state federations becomes more vital than ever," says AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. "I am committed to the idea that every one of our affiliates needs to strongly support our state federations and central labor councils."

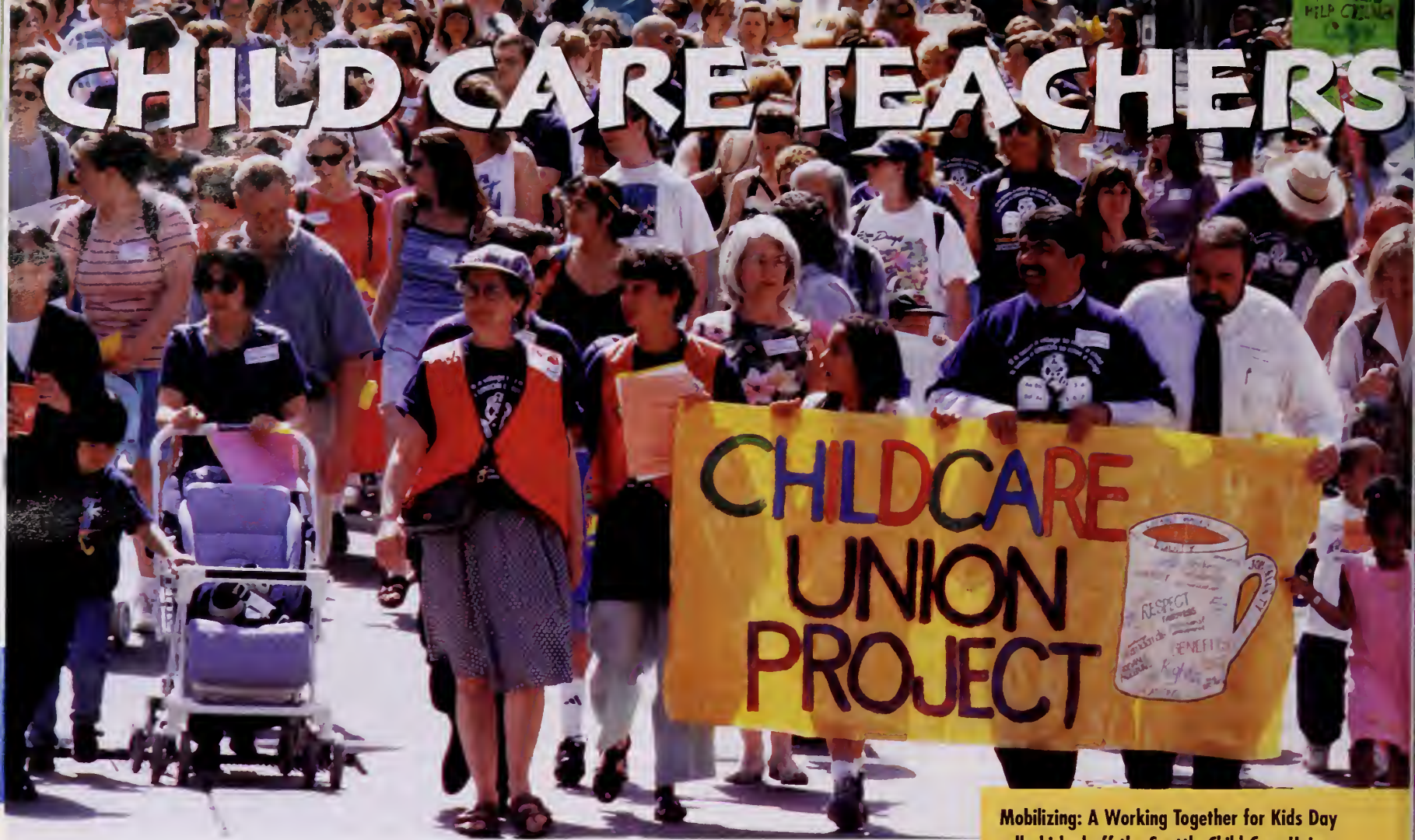
The New Alliance proposal can help create that climate nationwide, wherever working families are fighting for economic and political strength state by state, community by community. ☐

Committee 2000 Seeks Comments

The Committee 2000 presented its New Alliance proposal to the AFL-CIO Executive Council in May. The committee will review details of the proposal during its retreat in July. Delegates to the AFL-CIO convention will consider approving the plan at the October convention in Los Angeles.

Committee 2000 members want to get your feedback on the New Alliance proposal. To submit comments or request more information, e-mail newalliance@aflcio.org or write to New Alliance, AFL-CIO, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. ☐

CHILD CARE TEACHERS



CARL RAINERY

BY ARLEE C. GREEN

Mobilizing: A Working Together for Kids Day rally kicked off the Seattle Child Care Union Project last year.

Cloe Wright, a child care worker at Small Faces Child Development Center in Seattle, lives in a room she rents by the month because she can't afford an apartment. She drives to work in a 14-year-old car she recently bought with a \$1,500 loan—more than she can afford, even though her \$8.89 hourly wage is above the \$7.19 average for child care providers in King County, Wash., most of whom lack health care coverage and pensions.

While parents strain to afford quality child care, caregivers such as Wright are paid wages so low they can't even afford transportation to get to work. And although they care for others, they often cannot afford the care they need. Only 18 percent of the nation's child care centers offer fully paid health care coverage to teaching staff, according to a 1995 report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. As a result of all these factors, annual turnover rate for child care workers is more than 40 percent, according to the Center for Child Care Work-

force—undermining the quality of care and turning a profession vital to the nation's young children into a low-wage job with no future. In the past year, one-third of the dozen core workers at Small Faces quit, and three others "have plans to move on," Wright says.

Finding solutions to end the cycle of low wages and high turnover isn't easy. Wright, like many caregivers, does not think that parents can or should pay more. She sees a better solution, one that improves the system for everyone. That's why she joined SEIU District 925 last year and helped organize her co-workers. And that's why child care teachers around the country are reaching out—to unions such as SEIU and AFSCME.

A multiunion organizing campaign in Seattle

District 925 and the community-based child care group Seattle Worthy Wages, with key support from the King County Labor Council, Seattle Union Now and the Washington State Jobs With Justice, planted the seeds of their areawide orga-

nizing campaign 18 months ago when union organizers met with Seattle-area caregivers, answering their questions and laying out the union's strategy for raising wages and improving working conditions. The goal of the Childcare Union Project is to supplement the industry's funding—now heavily dependent on the fees paid by parents—with public funding, similar to the public school model. That is the approach caregivers such as Pat Durbin want to hear. Durbin, who works at Able Childcare Center, joined the union last year and quickly took the lead in organizing his center and educating parents about workers' need for a union. The key to CUP's legislative campaign, he says, "is asking local, state and federal governments to do their share."

In its efforts to sign up Seattle's 6,000 child care teachers, CUP joins a multiunion, area-wide organizing campaign among workers in such industries as construction, maritime, health care, hotel and high tech. Seattle Union Now, a joint project of the AFL-CIO, King County Labor Council and local and international

ORGANIZE

Worker-organizers in Seattle and Philadelphia are at the forefront of the battle to end low wages and high turnover for child care teachers

unions, and with organizing support from Washington State Jobs With Justice, has added 20 new organizers since it began last year, with plans for 15 more in the next few months, according to CLC Executive Secretary-Treasurer Ron Judd.

"We are trying to think differently about how to address these issues, such as a 40 percent turnover rate of teachers, the ability of child care centers to pay a living wage for its employees and the creation of stable child care centers that parents can depend on." The council worked with CUP in setting up press events, phone-banking and legislative action.

From May to October 1998, CUP organizers met with the caregivers after work, at in-service training sessions, during the children's nap periods and at the workers' homes, signing up about 300 workers as at-large members (workers who join the union even though their employers have not been organized) and organizing 150 at a dozen centers across Seattle. All but one employer granted card-check recognition. At Small Faces in northwest Seattle, Wright was among the workers who voted for the union 14-1.

By January 1999, the union had begun bargaining a joint contract covering the 12 centers. The bargaining team is made up of a representative from each center, and the teachers think they will reach an agreement by Labor Day. The joint contract will become the model agreement for the area's child care centers.

From the beginning, CUP's organizing campaign included a grassroots political action strategy. With the backing of parents and some child care owners, the union is pressing state legislators to support funding for a career and wage ladder for child care workers based on experience and education. "We want to show you can decrease turnover through the union's effort and legislative gains," says Debbie Schneider, president of SEIU District 925. "We can then use it to persuade other states to release more funding. There is a lot of child care grant money that is not spent."

Worker-organizers key in Philadelphia

In Philadelphia, where union leaders launched the United Child Care Union last year, union organizers are focusing on centers that serve children from low-income families, including those in the federal Head Start program. Similar to CUP's strategy, UCCU relied on key workers at each site to sign up their co-workers. As a result, the campaign organized some 400 workers at 31 different sites in three separate Head Start programs run by Resources for Human Development. After 70 percent had signed cards, the union sought recognition from RHD. The company responded with an aggressive anti-union campaign, says UCCU organizing director Denise Dowell.

UCCU, part of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees/AFSCME, fought back. A federal audit prevented the company from using federal money to fund the expense of its anti-union campaign, including bonuses, printing and attorney fees, says Dowell. The Rev. Jesse Jackson came to the union's rally for the child care workers—who voted for the union 243-125 in January.

"We waged a positive campaign and drew in a lot of community support—and we won," says Dowell.

Organizer Vickie Millhouse credits the teachers with the victory, saying they ran a

strong campaign "because of what they have endured all these years." People with 16 to 17 years on the job had to work two jobs to pay their bills, she says.

The organizing successes in Seattle and Philadelphia are strong first steps in bringing higher wages, more benefits, better working conditions and respect on the job to child care workers. "Together with our community allies," says Judd, "we have the opportunity to build a child care rights movement in our nation that helps solve the problems that undermine child care." @



DOROTHY GIBSON

Organized: At Able Childcare Center, teacher Sara Guio oversees a painting project with (from left) Eduardo Sanchez, Arendje Louter and Kyle Diller.

"YOU HAVE TO GIVE 155 PERCENT AT THIS JOB"

Up until last March, Danica Williams, a child care teacher at Interlake Childcare and Learning Center in Seattle, worked a second job at a local church, caring for children under the age of 5. Because her annual earnings are so low, she must delay fixing her 22-year-old car. Still, she feels luckier than one of her co-workers, who works three jobs.

"You have to give about 155 percent at this job, and you can only do that for a number of years," says Williams, who finds it a challenge not to burn out from the demands on the job and the stress of trying to make ends meet. Last year, she went to a meeting to find out about SEIU District 925's plans to organize child care workers. She helped organize her co-workers and now is a member of the union's bargaining team, which is negotiating a joint contract covering 12 area child care centers. Williams also is focusing on finding legislative funding solutions—and says although much hard work must be done first to change public opinion, she's ready for the challenge. @

Labor 2000

Building to Win, Building to Last

BY MIKE HALL

The 2000 elections are more than a year away, but working families already are building on the grassroots momentum they generated in Labor '98—and on the coast-to-coast success that put working family issues at the forefront of local and national agendas.

In March, Ohio union activists kicked off Cleveland Labor Power! when they agreed to mobilize for political action, beginning with a living wage campaign. The 15 unions at the group's first meeting each agreed to recruit volunteers for Labor Power! These member volunteers then can form the core of Labor 2000's efforts in the city, says John Ryan, executive secretary of the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor.

Early this year, the Kansas City (Mo.) Labor Council, AFL-CIO, reached out to union members and mobilized a large voter turnout for pro-union city council candidate Kay Waldo Barnes, who defeated a two-term incumbent by a hefty 59 to 41 percent margin in March. Farther south, unions signed up hundreds of voters in a 20-city tour in late April as part of the Mississippi



Building on success: Unions' Labor 2000 campaign will expand on successful Labor '98 efforts, such as the fight in Oregon to defeat a paycheck deception initiative.



In office: UAW member Shirley Underwood, making a difference as a Southgate (Mich.) city council member.

Voter Registration Crusade sponsored by the Rev. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH Coalition. And in Allegheny County, Pa., seven union members are running for county council, boosting their campaign through the CLC's Working Families 2000 program.

"We want to help elect pro-working family and pro-union candidates and build our strength to pass local legislation on core issues like a living wage, fair taxes, good public services and restoring the freedom of workers to join together in unions," says Allegheny Labor Council President Jack Shea. Less than two weeks after launching Working Families 2000, the leading candidate for county executive added enactment of a living wage to his platform.

Issues and action

Labor 2000, as outlined by the AFL-CIO Executive Council, will expand on the successful elements of unions' efforts in last year's elections: membership mobilization around issues important to working families, such as Social Security, Medicare, the minimum wage and trade; recruiting and training union members to run for office; registering voters and supporting community and coalition efforts to ensure broad participation in elections.

In 1998, an off-year election, unions' efforts to rally working families on key issues turned out a sizable 49 percent of adults in union

households, compared with 33 percent in nonunion homes who voted, according to AFSCME President Gerald McEntee. McEntee, who heads the AFL-CIO Executive Council Committee on Political Education, says educating and mobilizing members around working family issues is the key to Labor 2000.

"They get it when you explain the issues. Then they get fired up to volunteer, to vote, to get their union brothers and sisters involved. That's what we're counting on to keep us rolling in 2000."

Labor 2000 mobilization and issue education will center on worksite visits, member-to-member contacts, mailings, events and communication through union publications. Local unions, central labor councils and state federations also will expand on the issues and candidate forums they sponsored in 1998, making candidate questionnaires and question-and-answer sessions an integral part of the member education process.

Building on the success of union voter registration drives that added 1.2 million voters in the last two years, unions will be looking to register another 3 million voters from union households by 2000. Their efforts will be boosted by the ranks of union activists trained by the AFL-CIO National Labor Political Train-



GLORIA HUNTER

Statewide action: Newly elected to the Kansas state legislature—SEIU member Melany Barnes.

ing Center. Last year, the center trained more than 750 union activists for political education and mobilization in key congressional districts. Training for 2000 will begin this summer to enable political coordinators and volunteer activists to get an early start in mobilizing and educating union members.

Union activists know that to advance a working families agenda, we have to elect lawmakers who really understand the everyday problems of working families—and who understands better than a union member? Launched in 1997, the AFL-CIO's *2000 in 2000* initiative to recruit and train 2,000 union members to run for local, state and national office is already well on its way to reaching its goal. Last year, 420 of 626 union members running for office were elected (see below).

Building progressive coalitions on behalf of workers and supporting nonpartisan voter registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns in Latino, African American and Asian Pacific Islander communities are also key components of Labor 2000.



At the table: Working for working families is Tony Hill, Longshoremen member, Florida state representative and state AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer.

By building on the growing and seasoned base of union members who have given their time and effort to making the voices of working families heard, Labor 2000 will engage and mobilize union members as never before in a grassroots effort rallying working Americans to demand that bread-and-butter, working family issues take precedence at the ballot box and beyond. ☐

Electing Union Members for the Future of Working Families

In January, Melany Barnes was sworn in to her first elected office—as a representative in the Kansas state legislature. One of the first group of union members running for public office in the AFL-CIO's *2000 in 2000* initiative, Barnes is already making an impact. The SEIU Local 513 member has introduced bills calling for equal pay, collective bargaining for public employees and stronger legal rights for workers in workers' compensation cases.

That's what happens when union members hold public office.

For years, bankers, lawyers and business moguls have dominated politics and wielded the power of elected office. In 1997, the union movement developed a strategy to ensure that across the nation, from school boards all the way to Congress, the lawmakers we elect reflect working families and their interests. That strategy, *2000 in 2000*, involves identifying and recruiting 2,000 union members to run for public office in 2000.

"The most important thing is being at the table," says Tony Hill, a Florida state representative, Longshoremen member and

state AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer. "No matter how much money we give politicians, there is nothing like having one of our own at the table."

With their futures at stake, who would working families rather have in public office: a union colleague or a banker?

"It's the folks who created the middle class, and that's organized labor, who are the only hope of hanging onto the middle class. I don't see anybody else out there fighting for it," Barnes says.

Last year, the AFL-CIO identified and tracked 626 union member candidates—420 of whom were elected, with some incredible successes:

- In Nevada, 15 of 16 union members running for state legislative seats won.
- In Rhode Island, 28 of 30 candidates for various offices won.
- In Maryland, all 20 union member candidates were elected.

The *2000 in 2000* initiative will give union members the tools to expand on 1998 victories. Working with state federations, central labor councils and local

unions, *2000 in 2000* will sponsor region training sessions, offer tips on running a successful campaign, provide training materials and give potential candidates the opportunity to network with other union member officeholders and candidates.

"One human being on a city council can make a world of difference in a city. People listen to you," says UAW member Shirley Underwood, who has made a difference on the Southgate (Mich.) City Council by spearheading drives that passed resolutions backing locked-out *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* workers and Steelworkers fighting to curb foreign steel dumping.

Unionists who believe working families need a stronger voice to protect our rights on the job and to fight for affordable health care, quality education, good jobs and good wages and the right to better our lives by joining together in unions should take a strong look at becoming part of *2000 in 2000*.

To become part of *2000 in 2000*, or for more information, call 1-888-3AFLCIO or e-mail: 2000in2000@aflcio.org. ☐

Making the grade: Title I, up for renewal this year in Congress, enables all students to get a quality education.

Chicago-area teacher JoAnn Owens credits computers and educational software called "Beat the Clock" with helping Lamont, a fifth-grader, warm up to math. "He wasn't interested in anything bookwise or pencil-and-paperwise," says Owens. But after she added computer time for Lamont and his classmates to practice multiplication tables, "Lamont doesn't mind doing pencil and paper work anymore," says Owens, a member of the Chicago Teachers Union, an AFT affiliate. The computers also provide printed analyses of the students' progress, allowing her to better tailor her lessons to the children's needs.

Owens knows there would have been no money for computers at her campus, Florence B. Price Elementary School, if not for Title I, a federal program that seeks to ensure all children have access to quality education.

Title I provides billions of dollars in funding each year to schools with high concentrations of low-income students. As part of a larger federal civil rights law known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I also helps schools initiate programs to assist all students—regardless of economic status or racial background—succeed academically. This year, Congress is undertaking its periodic review of the law—opening the door for weakening it—and union activists, as in past civil rights battles, are in the forefront of making sure it stays strong.

At Florence B. Price School, where 95 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, Title I enabled the school to hire more teachers to reduce class sizes from 30 to 21. "When you have 30-plus students, you miss a lot of them," Owens says. "Now we can reach all the children." There's money for helping teachers improve their math skills, for parent training and for after-school tutoring in reading and math. Nationwide, Title I has been key to improving education for low-income students. Since 1992, 9-year-olds at schools with a high number of low-income students have improved test scores as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress: Reading scores have gone up eight points and math scores nine points, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

The union members who work at schools—teachers, administrators, bus drivers, janitors and cafeteria workers—have a direct stake in how Congress reshapes Title I. But ensuring all children get a quality public education is an issue that affects all working families.

Quality public education for all means a better workforce. The high-paying jobs of the future will require more education. College graduates earn an average of \$851 a week, compared with \$486 for high school graduates and \$341 for those who don't finish high school, according to a 1998 study by the U.S. Department of Labor, which also reports a higher unemployment rate for high school dropouts than for college graduates. "Education is the

Renewing America's Commitment to Equal Education



KEEPING TITLE I STRONG

engine for mobility in this country, and Title I is the most important part of that engine," says Bella Rosenberg, assistant to AFT President Sandra Feldman.

Quality public education for all means democracy can work. Union efforts to register and mobilize voters can succeed only if young voters have the background in reading and civics to make informed choices about issues that affect their lives. "Without an enlightened citizenry, there is no democracy," says Rosenberg.

Quality public education for all means closing the gap between racial groups. While the achievement gap between white students and African Americans and Latinos is still too large, federal guidelines and funding give schools the tools they need to narrow the gap. The current attacks on affirmative action and equal access to college make improving education from kindergarten through the 12th grade even more critical.

Quality public education for all won't happen through a voucher system. Proponents of using public funds for private schools like to highlight the shortcomings of some urban public schools. What they don't say is that vouchers would leave behind the students they claim to want to help—by reducing funding and support for those remaining in public schools.

As a teacher, Owens needs support for basic education tools so she can help a student like Lamont become the citizen and worker she knows he can be. The AFL-CIO is part of a coalition of education and civil rights groups pushing Congress to redouble its commitment to equal education for all children. When Congress begins to revamp the Elementary and Secondary Education Act this year, we will be urging union members to ask their representatives to support provisions giving all students access to excellent public schools. For more information, contact the AFL-CIO Civil and Human Rights Department at 202-637-5270. @

—Laureen Lazarovici

HEART OF THE MOVEMENT

James Harrell, 55, an organizer for PACE in Memphis, Tenn., worked 12 years at the Shepherd Tissue plant before he was fired in 1997 during an organizing drive. A member of PACE Local 566, Harrell traveled to Mexico this year to reach out to Mexican workers.

I have always believed that you should fight for what's right. That's why, when a manager sexually harassed a female employee, I had to stand up. The company suspended him for two weeks and asked her to keep quiet about it. But they still were sending him checks. I couldn't let that go unanswered, and I said something about it. I was fired for speaking out.

They fired me in the middle of an organizing drive. When Shepherd took over the plant from Kimberly-Clark in 1993, they refused to recognize the union and dropped wages. One day, Sept. 20, 1994, I was making \$22 an hour with Kimberly-Clark. On Sept. 21, I was making \$14.77 with Shepherd.

After I was fired, the union asked me to help organize that plant. When I was hand-billing outside the plant, all sorts of people came up to me—black and white—and shook my hand. The election was in September 1997, and they voted for the union 234-114, but Shepherd didn't want to bargain.

I worried about the 114 people in the plant who didn't vote for the union. Shepherd fired people all over the place, and they have no protection. Finally, after 18-and-a-half months, the new owner, Kruger, which operates closed union shops in Canada and Michigan, came in and said it would recognize the union and reinstate me along with six others. I'm happy for myself and my family, but mostly

Standing Up for What's Right

Role model: James Harrell (left) and PACE Region 7 Vice President Lloyd Walters (right) rally with PACE members in a January Martin Luther King Day march in Memphis, Tenn.



I'm happy for 400 or more people who have been going through hell.

When the new company had a meeting with the workers, you could see the joy on their faces. About 40 or 50 of them came up and said 'thank you.' That makes all the headaches and sleepless nights worth it.

In June, I went down to Mexico with a group called Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network to see what was happening and tie it in with what was going on in my community.

To hear about conditions down there is one thing; to see them is another. Kids start working at 14, and they're out at 25 because they can't move fast enough.

Mexico is happening in Memphis, Little Rock, everywhere. Companies are downsizing, privatizing, letting people go who are busting their butts to get things done.

"Mexico is happening in Memphis, Little Rock, everywhere. Companies are downsizing, privatizing, letting people go who are busting their butts to get things done."



PACE

Right after I got back from Mexico in July, I salted the Maybelline plant in Little Rock. I wanted to educate people about the union. We didn't win, but I got some people involved, and that's what counts.

I got started in the labor movement because my parents believed in unions. My father owned his own bicycle shop and was a Baptist minister. He always told us about the labor movement and how it changed America. He was a good provider, but he and my mother wanted more for their eight children. So my mother worked in people's homes for \$5 a day so we could have extra.

When I was about 9 or 10, I had an experience that stayed with me. I was a caddy at the golf course and this white man brought his son, who was around my age, and told me his name was Mr. Steve. I had never called anybody my age 'Mister' before, and I wouldn't do it. So I was fired. When I told my mother, she just said that as long as you think you're right, son, stand up for it. So now, I'm just doing what I can to change things. @

THE REAL MILLION-DOLLAR MAN

By age 78, most workers have long since retired. But after 59 years at Ford Motor Co.'s Dearborn, Mich., plant, Matel "Mat" Dawson Jr. still drives a forklift up to 12 hours a day, sometimes seven days a week—but not to get rich. The UAW Local 600 member devotes his hard-earned pay to charity. "This is what I want to do and what I enjoy," he says.

Dawson's recent \$200,000 scholarship grant to Wayne State University pushed his lifetime contributions above \$1 million. Over the years, the NAACP, the United Negro College Fund, Louisiana State University at Shreveport, churches and community colleges have benefited from his generosity.

The Shreveport native is a self-made philanthropist. His father was a cook and his mother took in laundry to feed seven children. Dawson left school before finishing ninth grade to get a job—but he believes in the importance of education and he puts his money where his heart is. "If my parents were alive today, they'd be happy about it, because they always supported higher education."

Dawson says hard work, frugal living, disciplined saving and astute investing gave him the power to do well by doing good. Today's young people, Dawson says, "are the future generation of this country." ☐



SAM VARN HAGEN

UAW member and self-made philanthropist Matel Dawson Jr.

Commemorating César Chávez

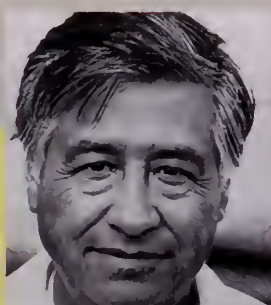
Jack Nava, founder of Positive Visions, a Ventura, Calif., group that promotes affirmative images of Latinos, believes César Chávez's life is an example of extraordinary accomplishment. After Chávez's death in 1993, Nava began circulating petitions and has collected more than 25,000 signatures urging the U.S. Postal Service to create a commemorative Chávez stamp.

Nava, who spent his youth toiling as a migrant farm worker, met the United Farm Workers' founder in 1988—an event that

profoundly affected him.

Nava, whose efforts are supported fully by the UFW and the César Chávez Foundation, is aware that the USPS does not issue commemorative stamps honoring individuals until 10 years after their deaths (except in the case of U.S. presidents). Nava says it would be great if his petitions prompt the USPS to issue a stamp before the 10-year anniversary. Otherwise, his efforts will ensure that the USPS considers a Chávez commemorative stamp in 2003.

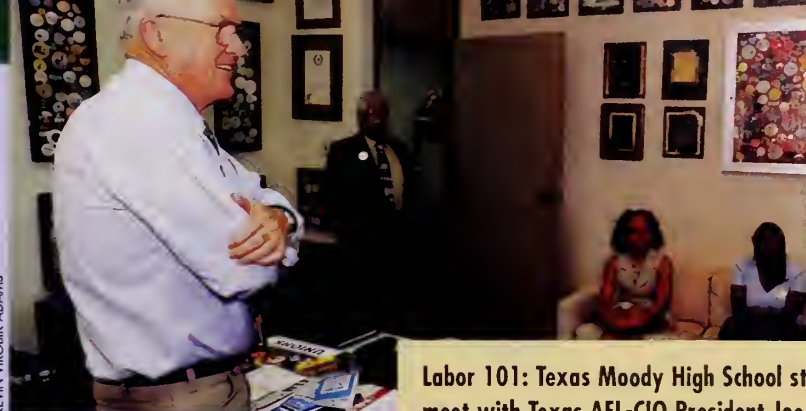
For copies of the petition, call Positive Images for Our Community at 805-648-7137. ☐



COURTESY CÉSAR CHÁVEZ FOUNDATION

First class: Efforts are under way to create a commemorative stamp honoring UFW under César Chávez.

KEVIN VROBOK-ADAMS



Labor 101: Texas Moody High School students meet with Texas AFL-CIO President Joe Gunn.

A Capitol Education

Many students travel to their state capitols each year to learn about government. In Austin, Texas, Mike Zepeda makes sure students get an education about the political issues vital to working families as well. His first stop on the way to the state capitol, where Zepeda hosts high school students on tours of the legislature, is the Texas AFL-CIO.

"The president gives them a pep talk," says Zepeda, president of the state chapter of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement. Zepeda says the meeting works to make students aware of ongoing organizing campaigns and bills

pending in the legislature.

"We got information about what unions do—protecting the rights of workers and helping kids," says Omar Becerra, an 11th grader at Moody High School in Corpus Christi and recent participant.

With their new knowledge of working family issues, many of the students become politically active, volunteering in voter registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns. Becerra joined other program participants in a recent march in Austin honoring Farm Workers founder César Chávez. Marchers urged lawmakers to make Chávez's birthday a state holiday. "We were in the march," he says, "not watching from the sidelines." ☐

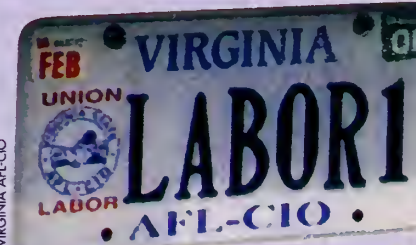
Licensed to Unionize

Union leaders have found an inexpensive and "moving" way to drive home the union message: union-personalized license plates. Last year, the Virginia AFL-CIO joined the ranks of labor organizations that issue plates with the federation's seal.

Virginia requires that a group requesting the special tag guarantee it will purchase at least 350 license plates. To ensure they could reach that number, state federation leaders distributed plate applications at their annual convention with a special offer—sign up for the plate and the state federation would pay the first year's \$10 fee. As a result, 402 vehicles now bear the special Virginia AFL-CIO plates, according to the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles.

The federation paid for the initial run because "it broadens our message," says Virginia AFL-CIO President Daniel LeBlanc, whose own plate on his Pontiac Bonneville reads "LABOR1" ☐

VIRGINIA AFL-CIO



Tagged: Driving home the union message in Virginia.

STEWARDS:

Front-line Union Advocates

New workers develop their first—and most lasting—images of a union from their union shop stewards. As the union representative with whom workers have the most contact, shop stewards must be front-line advocates for the union by providing sound advocacy for members.

By providing hands-on tips—from new member orientation to union building—the new *AFL-CIO Stewards Manual* can help boost the effectiveness of union stewards. The following is an excerpt from the chapter, “The Grievance Procedure.”

- Recognize the difference between a grievance and a gripe. Employees may assume anything they don't like about the job is a grievance. A grievance is a violation of a worker's right under the contract or the law.

- Listen attentively and sympathetically. Don't rush the conversation, get emotionally involved or let anger hinder understanding the main issue.

- Ask questions. A steward's job is to get the facts. Don't settle for generalities and vague statements such as, “They're giving me too much work.” Get the full story by asking for dates, examples and witnesses. Take detailed notes.

- Investigate. Talk with workers who may have witnessed the incident or could verify facts. Don't settle for hearsay. Investigate thoroughly until a clear picture emerges.

- Check the files. Stewards have a right to information from the employer to process a grievance. For example, if an employee is disciplined for absenteeism, stewards can examine attendance records. Check the contract, workplace rules and federal and state laws.

- Analyze the facts. There are two grievances—disciplinary and nondisciplinary. In a disciplinary grievance, the employer has disciplined an employee. The employer must prove there was “just cause” for the action. If the grievance does not involve discipline, the union or employee has to prove its case. Stewards must provide evidence that management is guilty of a violation of the contract, a violation of past practices, an illegal discrimination or a violation of state or federal laws or the employer's rules.

- Write the grievance. Based on the facts, write a short statement that answers: Who was involved? When did the incident take place? What happened? Where did it happen? Why is this a grievance (contract violation, disciplinary action, etc.)? What settlement or corrective action does the union seek?

- File the grievance. It's important to know and meet all union or workplace deadlines for filing grievances.

- Keep the member informed throughout the process.

The *Stewards Manual* will be available in July from the AFL-CIO Support Services Department, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, 800-342-1235. ☐

As the union representative with whom workers have the most contact, shop stewards must be front-line advocates for the union by providing sound advocacy for members.

UNION LINE

PET Shop

Furry and feathered family members deserve union-made pet food and supplies. Here are a few union brands for the dogs, cats, birds and fish at your home.

Pet Food and Treats—Alpo, Alpo Protein Plus by UFCW at ALPO Petfoods Inc.; Gravy Train, Ken-L-Ration, Skippy, 9 Lives by UFCW at Heinz Pet Products; Meijer at Pet Life; Dog Chow, Cat Chow, Puppy Chow, Kitten Chow, High-Pro, Meow Mix, Fit & Trim, Fieldmaster, Chuck Wagon Bits, Mainstay, Alley Cat, Dealers' Pride, Purina O.N.E. Dog Products, Purina O.N.E. Cat Products, Pro Plan Series Dog Nutrition, Little Bites, Chuck Wagon Stampede, plus private labels for about 20 grocers by Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers at Ralston Purina Pet Foods.

Pet Supplies—Stylette pet carriers by USWA at Stylette Plas-

tics Co.; General Cage wire pet cages by USWA at General Cage Inc.; Wisco and Purina Checkerboard pet tags at Wisco Industries Inc.; Tidy Cat, Tidy Scoop, Kitty Litter Maxx, Scamp Scoop Purina Maxx, Purina Maxx MC, Kitty Litter and Kitty Litter Scoop by USWA at Golden Cat Corp.; and absorbent kitty litter by USWA at Johnson March Corp.; Penn-Plax fish tanks and bird cages by UAW at Penn-Plax Plastics Inc. ☐



EXHIBITS



AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer William Lucy

Bill Lucy Featured in Art Exhibit

An impressionist painting of AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer William Lucy is part of an international traveling exhibit, "Hope in Our City," which depicts people and places in Washington, D.C. The Washington Arts Group commissioned the piece, painted by Marguerite Slocum Quinn. It appears in a section of the exhibit titled "A Place of Heroes."

Lucy's influence "is irrefutable in this community, across the nation and throughout the world," says Jerry Eisley, director of the Washington Arts Group. Lucy is president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and an AFL-CIO vice president.

The exhibition, which includes works by nearly 50 sculptors, painters, photographers and multimedia artists, debuted in Washington Feb. 2 and will tour the country in 2000.

THE WASHINGTON ARTS GROUP

Woody Guthrie on Tour

"This Land is Your Land: The Life and Legacy of Woody Guthrie," a traveling exhibition honoring the work of the famous folk singer, poet, protester and idealist, premieres in Los Angeles at the Gene Autry Museum of Western Heritage June 26.

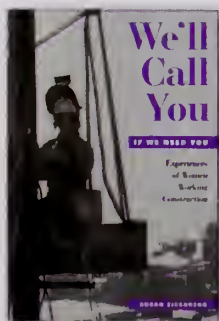
Author of more than 1,000 original songs and poems, four novels and hundreds of essays and newspaper columns, Guthrie had a career that spanned only 17 years until his death in 1957.

The exhibit, a collaboration between the Smithsonian and Nora Guthrie, executive director of the Woody Guthrie Archives, features rarely seen folk art and film footage of Guthrie, including previously unreleased music and interviews from the Smithsonian Folkways collection.

The exhibit will be in Los Angeles through Sept. 26 before moving to Massachusetts, Ohio, Oklahoma and Washington, D.C., when it arrives at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History during summer 2000. For more information and exhibit locations, visit the website at www.si.edu/sites.

PUBLICATIONS

We'll Call You If We Need You: Experiences of Women Working Construction, by Susan Eisenberg, is drawn from the oral histories of 28 women—carpenters, electricians, iron workers, painters and plumbers—whom Eisenberg interviewed about their job experiences. Eisenberg, a master electrician and a member of the Electrical Workers, wrote the book because increasing job opportunities for women on federal construction projects in the 1970s and 1980s did not result in growing numbers of women doing that kind of work. \$25. ILR Press,



an imprint of Cornell University Press, 800-666-2211.

Capital Moves: RCA's 70-Year Quest for Cheap Labor, by Jefferson Cowie, details how this electronics manufacturer hopscotched around America in search of cheap and malleable labor before jumping the border to Mexico. Cowie, who teaches labor history at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, looks at the impact of RCA's actions on workers and communities in Camden, N.J.; Bloomington, Ind.; Memphis, Tenn.; and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. \$29.95. Cornell University Press, 800-666-2211.

VIDEO

Step by Step: Building a Feminist Movement, 1941-1977, an historical documentary produced by Wisconsin Public Television, highlights the role of union women in building the modern women's movement. The hour-long program focuses on the lives of eight women, three of whom are union activists—Addie Wyatt of the United Packinghouse Workers of America and Dorothy Haener and Doris Thom of the UAW. Six of the eight also were founders of the National Organization for Women. To order the VHS cassette, send check or money order for \$40 plus \$5 for postage and handling to Step by Step, P.O. Box 285, Worthington, Mass. 01098.

WEB RESOURCES

www.cdc.gov/niosh/stresswk.html—No job description ever mentions it, but stress is a big part of the job for many workers. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, which has studied how job stress can increase the risk of injury or illness for workers, reports its findings on its website and gives a step-by-step guide to preventing job stress, including a list of resources. All of the web page materials can be reprinted for wider distribution.



TELEVISION

"The Awful Truth"

Producer Michael Moore is following up his famous movie "Roger and Me"—in which he pursued former General Motors Chairman Roger Smith—and his "TV Nation" comedy show with "The Awful Truth," a 16-week series on the Bravo cable network.

Airing Sunday evenings through the end of June, the show features an episode in which Moore visits the United Parcel Service to try to collect the 2,000 jobs UPS promised to deliver in its contract with the Teamsters. Check local television listings for broadcast times or check the website at www.theawfultruth.com. @

Making a Difference Every Day with Union Organizers!



Organizing Institute

Each day, thousands of working Americans are taking action to form unions to win respect and a voice on the job. But whether they work in office buildings or airports, construction sites or emergency rooms, workers face tremendous hurdles to exercise their fundamental freedom to choose a union.

The critical difference in whether they succeed? Trained and committed organizers. As organizing activity increases across the country, organizers have never been in greater demand than right now.

That's why the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute—designed to give talented and energetic people hands-on experience and training in the world of union organizing—is a critical resource for today's unions.

You can build your union's organizing potential—and that of the entire union movement—through the Organizing Institute. Here's how:

Sponsor a member organizer for training. Our best source of talent is in our own membership.

Refer a talented potential organizer to the OI. Community and union activists from outside your union can be screened and trained through the Organizing Institute.

Sponsor, refer and put an organizer to work on your campaigns. Providing mentoring opportunities for new organizers will ensure your union's growth.

For more information, call 1-800-848-3021.

REFERRAL FORM

This person would make a great union organizer!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

My name: _____

My phone: _____

Return to: Organizing Institute
815 16th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
Attn: Referrals

Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

JULY 1999

America @work

MANUFACTURING

Why it
Matters

ALSO INSIDE: • Labor College Graduates First Class • Healthy Choices for Medicare

IDEAS AND VIEWS FROM YOU

"IN APRIL 1999, the University of Arizona chapter of Students Against Sweatshops staged a 10-day sit-in in the office of the university president to pressure him to take seriously our demands concerning contracts with apparel companies selling goods manufactured in sweatshops. Our resolution, which demanded the full disclosure of factory locations of apparel companies contracting with the University of Arizona, independent monitoring...livable wages...and commitments to the protection of women's rights...received resounding support from local labor organizations. We view this action as one step along the way to developing a lasting local coalition for economic justice and cross-border solidarity between campus, community, labor and faith-based groups here in Tucson."—Mike Mulcahy, Students Against Sweatshops, Tucson, Ariz.

Say What?

How has your union bargained for equal pay and pay equity?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue.

America@work

815 16th St., N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20006

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Fax: 202-508-6908

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Here's What You Say

ABOUT THE ACTIONS YOUR UNION IS TAKING TO BUILD ON THE MOMENTUM WORKING FAMILIES GENERATED IN THE 1998 ELECTIONS:

"Our local central body promotes the union message in a variety of ways by actively participating in community service projects, such as the NALC food drive. We form coalitions to work on areas of common concern. For example, we recently co-sponsored a public meeting with the United Way and the Agency on Aging to express our concerns about the future of Social Security. We also have a successful apprenticeship program through the building trades, involving the school district and local businesses, and the message to the students is simple: Everyone benefits when things are built union!—Doug Peters, executive director, Hawkeye Labor Council, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in America@work.

"THE ARTICLES IN YOUR MAY ISSUE

by Laureen Lazarovici and Barbara Ehrenreich hit the spot. Last November, Detroit's citizens voted overwhelmingly for a living wage for working women and men. The issue was on the ballot because of a coalition made up of the Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO, members of the religious community and various community and neighborhood groups....[While] these wages only lift the wage earner to a minimal lifestyle...our living wage ordinance in Detroit is under attack from our Republican-controlled state government and various business and charitable groups, including (no surprise) the Chamber of Commerce."—Dave Ivers, IUOE Local 547

"MY UNION—IAM 751 IN SEATTLE—

got retirees heavily involved during the 1995 strike...[when] Boeing tried to cut medical benefits of those already retired....After successfully defending the benefits and helping win the strike, they stayed together as an ongoing group called 'Boeing Retirees on the Line.' BRL...is receiving strong support from current workers for its 'COLA for Retirees this Century' campaign as the union prepares for this year's contract negotiations. They are angry that retirees have not had any kind of a raise for 10 years, and inflation has eaten away the pensions.—Henry Noble, Machinists Local 751, Seattle

America@work

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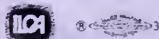
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CONTENTS



8

WHY MANUFACTURING MATTERS

Will the future of manufacturing look more like Harley or Huff? The answer depends on how workers, management and government respond to the new global economy and the extent to which government pursues policies that promote fair trade and manufacturing

12

CLASS OF '99

With its first graduating class, the National Labor College is preparing workers for the next millennium



15

MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES

Medicare's 34-year success in providing older Americans essential health security points the way to future strategies for maintaining Medicare as the nation's health care cornerstone

17

UNION SUMMER SNAPSHOTS

Union Summer interns have taken the skills they learned back to their college campuses, their communities and their unions, where they are working to ban sweatshops from exploiting workers, give the homeless a voice and build the union movement



4 CURRENTS

Working Families 2000
Scores in Pennsylvania

7 Days in June:
Making our voices heard

20 LIKE IT IS

The ABCs of Y2K

21 OUT THERE

New York rat smells trouble
Musicians in perfect harmony
Fire Fighters fired up

22 TOOLBOX

Making manufacturing jobs
work for working families

23 HOMEPAGE

Exhibit: Sweatshops
Website: Justice at Avondale

Workers Make Their Voices Heard for 7 Days in June

Through hundreds of rallies, in state and local legislative testimony and as part of grassroots community meetings, more than 100,000 working people in 37 states took action June 19–25 in support of their freedom to gain a voice at work by joining unions. The 7 Days in June events, sponsored by the AFL-CIO, built on last year's Make Our Voices Heard Day.

In Portland, members of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council and Jobs With Justice toured the airport and heard from shuttle bus drivers who tried to join the Amalgamated Transit Union, only to lose an election narrowly after a worker was fired for union activities. The Harris County (Texas) Central Labor Council rolled out its

Justice Bus and traveled to several worksites where employers are blocking workers' efforts to choose a union.

In Ohio, workers testified before the legislature about their struggles when they choose union membership, and worker-friendly lawmakers introduced a resolution backing the rights of workers to join unions.

Meanwhile, the Florida House and Senate issued a joint resolution proclaiming June 21–27 as Workers' Right to Organize Week, declaring that workers in unions have a voice on the job and that unions contribute to the economic vitality of communities.

The August America@work will carry full coverage of 7 Days in June events. ☐

66,000 Puerto Rico Public Employees Vote Union

Puerto Rico Department of Education workers—66,000 teachers, cafeteria workers, maintenance workers and others—won union representation in the first election since the commonwealth passed a collective bargaining bill for public employees last year.

The election was part of a two-part process, and workers will vote again in the fall to choose which union will represent them in each of four eligible bargaining units.

Approximately 150,000 public employees are eligible to form unions under the collective bargaining law. Department of Education employees are forming unions with AFSCME, AFT, SEIU and the UAW. Elections for other departments will be held later this year. ☐

Delivering a Message

Letter Carriers nationwide, with the support of the union movement, set up informational picket lines June 9 to let the U.S. Postal Service know they want a fair contract with substantial pay increases to match increased workloads. The rallies came one week before the two sides began arbitration that is expected to last throughout the summer.

Speaking before 2,000 NALC members and supporters outside the James A. Farley Post Office in midtown Manhattan, NALC President Vince Sombrotto (inset, above) said the turnout among letter carriers that day demonstrates to postal management that "it is the individual carrier who is demanding a fair contract that compensates them for the harder work they do." Sombrotto noted mail volume has doubled in the past 20 years, and the average carrier delivers 41.5 tons of mail each year.

The AFL-CIO Field Mobilization Department, along with state federations and central labor councils in nearly 50 cities, helped turn out union support for NALC members through community and media outreach, Street Heat mobilizations, e-mails, phone calls and mailings to members. Among those actions: A 500-strong rally in Honolulu at the main Post Office; a multiunion demonstration in Las Vegas, where Culinary Workers Local 226 provided a stage truck and sound system for 700 demonstrators; and a Street Heat action with 300 Milwaukee union members that the central labor council turned out through phone banks and fliers. ☐



JOE ROSEN/PHOTOBUREAU, INC.

Special delivery: More than 2,000 NALC members and their supporters turned out New York City, in one of hundreds of demonstrations supporting fair contract talks.

Rainbow Room Solidarity

Hundreds of teachers, nurses and public employees held a rally outside the GE Building in New York in support of 250 workers, members of Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 6, who were fired last Christmas

Eve by the new owners of the posh Rainbow Room restaurant. Speaking at the rally, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said, "The idea that a major New York restaurant owner would profit by firing longtime workers is a scandal." More than 100 public officials have signed pledges not to use any of the company's facilities until the workers are returned to their jobs.



BRUCE GILBERT

Rx for Organizing

As doctors get more and more fed up with bottom-line driven policies that compromise patient care, they are turning to unions to gain a voice on the job. In May, 800 doctors employed by Los Angeles County joined the Union of American Physicians and Dentists, an AFSCME affiliate.

"This election was about maintaining a competent and compassionate public health care system for the people of Los Angeles County," says Dr. Dan Lawlor, a key organizer in the effort.

At the same time, SEIU's Committee of Interns and Residents reached an historic agreement with the California Medical Association to strengthen the ability of doctors to negotiate for quality patient care. The new mutual endorsement plan paid off June 11 when 600 resident physicians at

four San Francisco Bay area hospitals voted to join CIR.

In June, the American Nurses Association House of Delegates overwhelmingly approved the creation of a separate labor organization, while the American Medical Association voted to form a labor union to bargain on behalf of doctors for better pay and benefits.

Meanwhile, 445 service and maintenance workers at the Long Beach Hospital and Nursing Home in Long Island, N.Y., are the newest members of Civil Service Employees Association/AFSCME. Heavy-handed employer tactics such as parking an ambulance with its lights flashing at the hospital on election day with a "Vote No" sign draped over it only strengthened workers' determination to get a voice on the job, says statewide organizer Mary Bryant. ☐

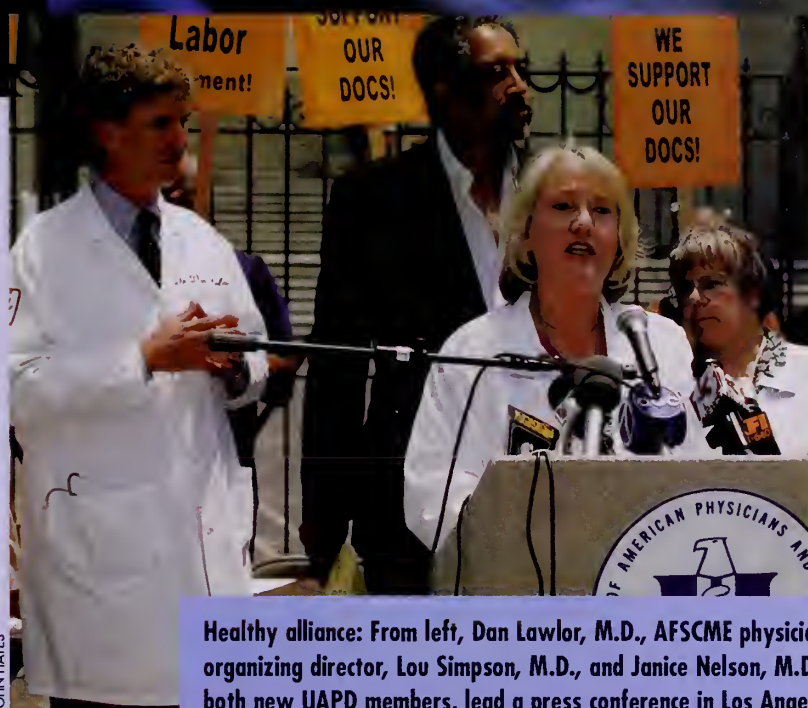
Building Community Ties

AFL-CIO constituency groups and union civil rights directors are developing strategies for a campaign to build community coalitions to support workers seeking to choose unions.

"You cannot organize in a vacuum," says William Lucy, AFSCME secretary-treasurer and president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. "We have to show people that there is a close connection between workers having a voice and the community's standard of living."

More than 200 activists from AFL-CIO constituency groups and union civil rights departments met in Seattle June 3-6 at the federation's Civil and Human Rights Conference. Participants discussed ways to create coalitions effectively around such issues as Social Security, discrimination in the workplace, an accurate census, economic justice and organizing. ☐

On the line: UNITE Vice President Clayola Brown (right) joins in the call for justice for workers at Alaska Airlines.



Healthy alliance: From left, Dan Lawlor, M.D., AFSCME physician organizing director, Lou Simpson, M.D., and Janice Nelson, M.D., both new UAPD members, lead a press conference in Los Angeles.

SPOTLIGHT

Union Members Score Big in Pennsylvania Elections

In Allegheny County, Pa., the central labor council's Working Families 2000 project was key to a string of working family victories in the May primaries: Four out of seven union members on the ballot and 10 of 15 CLC-endorsed candidates won primary races for county council seats.

Among the keys to the victories, union leaders say, were the CLC's countywide worksite leafleting. Volunteers made more than 9,000 phone calls in the week before the election and 4,000 get-out-the-vote calls on Election Day. Dozens of union members knocked on doors in 30 precincts the Saturday before the polling.

"We talked to our members at their workplaces, on their front porches, on the phone and through the mail," says CLC President Jack Shea. "Labor was united like never before in this race."

Working Families 2000 is part of the AFL-CIO's 2000 in 2000 initiative to recruit and train 2,000 union members to run for local, state and national office. In 1998, 420 of 626 members running for office nationwide were elected.

The four Allegheny County union members getting a jump on 2000 in 2000 are AFT members Jeanne Brimmeier and Anthony Taliani, Electrical Worker Rick Schwartz and Steelworker John DeFazio. America@work will provide regular updates on 2000 in 2000. ☐



Campaigning: Steelworker John DeFazio (left), who won a primary election for the Allegheny County Council, talks with members of USWA Local 1557 at the US Steel Clairton Works.

No Dispute



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

The Newspaper Guild-CWA President Lindo Foley and Utility Workers President Donald Wightman were elected to the board of directors of the American Arbitration Association in April. With 117 directors, including eight union officials, the nonprofit AAA works to resolve disputes through arbitration, mediation, conciliation, negotiation, democratic elections and other voluntary procedures.

Ride for Steel

As part of a 600-mile "Ride for Steel," dozens of Indiana Steelworkers traveled by motorcycle to Washington, D.C., where they joined with nearly 1,000 USWA members June 22 in a Capitol Hill rally to protest the illegal dumping of foreign steel. Since last fall, Steelworkers have waged a massive grassroots campaign—intense lobbying efforts, national letter-writing initiatives and hundreds of community demonstrations—which resulted in a massive victory in May when the House voted 289-

141 on a bill to stop below-cost steel imports. Despite defeat by the Senate, USWA President George Becker vowed to continue the fight "to win justice for workers, families and communities that are threatened by the illegal dumping of steel."

BUILDING UNIONS, City by City

Leaders active in the AFL-CIO Union Cities initiative, designed to mobilize members in support of organizing and political action, shared tips and strategies during four regional conferences this spring. The regional "Union, City by City" summits come on the heels of two national Union Cities conferences in the past three years.

Union activists discussed a variety of outreach and mobilization efforts. At the Southern Region conference, participants heard about the Greater

Louisville Central Labor Council's successful efforts to win better wages for workers at Tyson Foods Inc. At the Western Region conference, Street Heat coordinators discussed strategies for building successful worksite mobilizations. Participants also held a "brag and steal" social, where they shared the effective actions they are taking to mobilize workers.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney praised union activists in the South as "warriors" who have won important political gains despite obstacles to organizing. In June, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka roused activists in St. Louis, while Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson met with East Coast unionists in Cherry Hill, N.J. @



MIKE DEER/FOX

Talking union: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka talks with conference participants in St. Louis.

Don't Bank on It

Dozens of Steelworkers members and supporters took part in Wells Fargo Bank's annual stockholder meeting in San Francisco in April, where they announced \$1 billion in withdrawals made to protest management's treatment of striking Oregon Steel Mills workers. Wells Fargo is the key player in a consortium of banks that is underwriting Oregon Steel's anti-worker, anti-union campaign.

The Contra Costa County (Calif.) Board of Supervisors

plans to close its \$25 million in accounts at Wells Fargo, and similar moves are being considered by local governments in Denver, Los Angeles and San Francisco, USWA says.

Less than three months after being forced out on strike in 1997, 1,100 Steelworkers at Oregon Steel-owned CF&I Steel in Pueblo, Colo., made an unconditional offer to return to work, but management took back only a few workers, running the mill with replacements instead. @

Organizing Institute Honors Unsung Hero

As an organizer and union leader, Elaise Fox, secretary-treasurer of Food and Commercial Workers Local 1657 in Birmingham, Ala., has helped nursing home workers win better lives by choosing unions in more than 35 successful organizing drives. The AFL-CIO Organizing Institute honored Fox in April with its first Youngdahl Award for Southern Organizers. The award is in memory of Jim Youngdahl, an organizer in the South who became a union lawyer and tireless fighter for workers' freedom to choose unions. It honors the "unsung heroes" who help to increase the size and scope of union organizing at a time when labor is focused more than ever on the need to grow.

COURTESY ELAISE FOX



AFGE Welcomes Kosovar Refugees

When the first 1,200 Kosovar refugees arrived at Fort Dix, N.J., in May, the 300 members of AFGE Local 1999 played a big role in making them feel welcome. Local 1999 President Vince Pesini says members of the Fort Dix Directorate of Public Works, together with Army personnel,

worked long hours on short notice to refurbish unused barracks for the families.

When the Kosovar families arrived on U.S. soil, the local union's volunteer baggage handlers and bus drivers met their planes at nearby McGuire Air Force Base. Local 1999 members in the Health Services Department and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service eased them through the physical exams and paperwork.

Pesini says most of the refugees were overwhelmed at first. "We gave out little welcome packages with toothbrushes, combs and personal items. As they got more comfortable, the kids especially, they started asking questions about the way of life in America."

AFGE members since have set up a second village at the installation, where some 3,000 new refugees were housed in mid-June. ☐



CAROL NISBET

Warm welcome: AFGE Local 1999 member Dee Messersmith ("Dee Dee the Clown,") cheers Kosovo children.

OUT FRONT

Students at the National Labor College of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies (see p. 12) are learning some extremely important lessons.

They're learning about labor history and labor law, collective bargaining and organizing. But perhaps more important, they're learning the value of what they know.

These are not your average college students. For various reasons—money and responsibilities, primarily—they didn't step into four years of college from high school. These are Steelworkers, Sheet Metal Workers, Painters and Allied Trades members, Office and Professional Workers, Teamsters and others who work hard in plants, factories, offices, at construction sites—and invest their spare time in strengthening their unions. These men and women include local union officers, stewards, bargaining team members, political activists and organizers who so believe that union membership is the way to a better life that they have found still more "spare time" to invest in higher education.

Why? Some say a college degree will mean more confidence when they sit across the table from a corporate suit with an MBA. Others say knowing more will be an asset when they volunteer for Labor 2000. Most of their reasons boil down to one: They are deeply committed to making themselves more valuable to their unions and to the working families their unions represent.

The experience they carry into the classroom can't be matched at other campuses. Discussions about every form of activism are enriched by the how-we-won and why-we-lost stories these students bring to life. The academic work of all students is inspired by brothers and sisters who put in overtime to afford time off for a week on campus, who struggle with unfamiliar computers to get papers written and who share personal stories of what union membership has meant in their lives. And when they leave the campus, plenty of work goes with them. After full days at work and full evenings of family life, they crack the books and dig into such topics as how the history of the American labor movement influences it today.

The men and women of the National Labor College are heroes and heroines to me, and they represent great hope for the future of our movement. Labor does many, many things right, and the National Labor College is among our best. It levels the playing field for our side, enabling working people who lacked educational opportunities earlier in their lives to gain the book-learning and the diploma that will put them on even footing with wealthy managers and politicians. It recognizes that their training and apprenticeships, their years of work, are at least as valuable as hours in school, and honors their experience with college credits.

I suggest that union leaders encourage and help activists and other members to further their education through the National Labor College. And to every member of the National Labor College's first graduating class, I say "congratulations and thank you." ☐

HEROES AND HEROINES ON CAMPUS

LEN KAMINSKY




BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

China: Human Rights Before Trade

The AFL-CIO is urging Congress to disapprove of the administration's annual renewal of normal trade relations with China until that country corrects its egregious record of human and workers' rights violations.

"The systematic violation of internationally recognized workers' rights is a crucial component" of the Chinese government's economic policy, which is based on strategically restricting access to its home market while aggressively promoting exports, said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. Sweeney spoke in June before the House Ways and Means subcommittee on trade.

In his testimony, Sweeney said that China, which also is seeking to join the World Trade Organization, the institution that enforces international trade rules, should be allowed to join the WTO only if it effectively enforces basic workers' rights. U.S. negotiators must insist on three conditions prior to China joining the WTO, Sweeney said: The Chinese government must allow its workers to organize and bargain for better working conditions and wages; free jailed human and union rights activists; and agree to support U.S. efforts to incorporate enforceable workers' rights into WTO rules. ☐

A woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue and white checkered shirt, is working on a motorcycle engine. She is using a tool to adjust or tighten a part of the engine. The engine is mounted on a red frame. In the background, there are other motorcycle engines and parts on a blue rack. The setting appears to be a factory or workshop.

Partnership: Denise L...
assembles engines at
Harley powertrain pla...
Milwaukee, where a l...
management partners...
jobs in the community.

Whether the future of American manufacturing looks more like Harley or Huffy depends on how well workers, management and government respond to the new global economy, and the extent to which government pursues policies that promote fair trade and manufacturing.

Manufacturing

When Harley-Davidson management announced plans in 1995 to relocate its engine assembly plant from Milwaukee to a so-called right-to-work state, putting 350 employees out of their jobs, union leaders rolled up their sleeves and devised innovative ways to increase productivity and maintain family-supportive jobs in the community.

"We asked for the opportunity to bid on the work and we came up with ways to do things differently," says John Gillard, president of PACE International Union Local 7209, which, along with Machinists Local 78, represents Harley workers. The company accepted the unions' ideas, and the two sides formed a partnership. Union members redesigned the way work was done and the company invested in new technology.

Today, employees influence every aspect of production as part of individual work groups headed by a supervisor. Eventually, the groups will function without supervisors, making decisions about overtime, quality control and scheduling. "It's kind of like being given the keys to the car," Gillard says.

The new partnership has resulted in an annual 20 percent productivity increase, Gillard says. Profits are up and the unions have organized new members. In 1998, the company added a second engine production facility, employing more than 700 workers.

The High Road to Good Jobs

The new High Roads Regional Partnerships Demonstration Project, co-sponsored by the AFL-CIO and the federation's Working for America Institute, hopes to encourage practices that retain good jobs in manufacturing. The partnership program is launching similar efforts in the service and public sectors.

The union movement will build on the lessons learned by labor management that have focused on retaining and creating good jobs. In manufacturing, the institute has identified six key strategies from such partnerships as the Steel Valley Authority in western Pennsylvania and the New York-based Garment Industry Development Corp. These strategies include:

- Developing new products and markets. High-road firms tend to use fewer employees so that new products and markets are needed to stop employment from declining.
- Providing training for a skilled workforce. As the voice for workers, unions can bargain for training that workers can use to make the company more competitive.

- Reducing costs by agreeing to use cost-saving production methods throughout all organized plants in the industry, not just in one plant.

- Taking collective action to gain funding to finance new training or plant modernization.

- Using union power to leverage new market opportunities for union firms.

- Steering pension investments toward firms that offer solid returns and produce good, new union jobs.

As part of the High Roads Regional Partnership, the institute will pick demonstration sites to implement these strategies in targeted communities after determining which manufacturing sectors need the most help and what strategies might work to keep manufacturing jobs in the community. The federation then will work with local unions, central labor councils and international unions to develop an action plan to save jobs and convince employers and community leaders to take part. ☐



COURTESY HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR COMPANY

But at the Huffy Bicycle plant in Celina, Ohio, where management told workers it needed to reduce costs to compete with cheaper imports, the outcome was starkly different.

To address the need for lower costs, members of Steelworkers Local 5369 agreed to take a 33 percent pay cut to save jobs. At the same time, they increased productivity and quality. In 1998, "the company showed us that our productivity, quality and safety record were better than the (nonunion) plant in Missouri,"

says John Folk, then-president of Local 5369. "Per clocked hour, we were able to build a better quality bike for 82 cents less than they were."

Yet a few months later, the company announced it was closing the Celina plant after 43 years. Rather than produce the high-quality bike in the United States, the company said it planned to import more bikes from China and move work to a maquiladora in Mexico, leaving 1,200 workers jobless.

Whether the future of American manufacturing resembles Harley or Huffy rests on how well workers, management and govern-

Why it Matters

BY JAMES B. PARKS

Repairing the World Economy and Stopping the Race to the Bottom

There are ways to create a competitive economy and still not lose manufacturing jobs. But too many big businesses are using new technologies to take advantage of cheap labor in developing nations. In doing so, they create a race to the bottom that endangers every worker's standard of living.

Companies that export jobs not only are lowering U.S. standards of living, they also are exploiting workers in developing countries and polluting the environment. They routinely use sweatshop and even forced prison labor. Such practices prevent real development that can benefit all. Instead, workers in developing countries are unable to afford our products or to buy the products they make themselves. Despite this, U.S. laws still give companies that send jobs overseas and exploit workers tax breaks and government subsidies.

Misguided trade policies also play a big role in gutting good manufacturing jobs. Agreements that allow other countries to export goods easily without giving the United States comparable access to their markets have caused a flood of imports that undercut and destroy manufacturing jobs, says USWA President George Becker. The U.S. trade deficit in 1998 was \$169.2 billion and is growing because of the recent financial crises in Asia and slow economic growth in Europe and South America. The crises reduced those nations' ability to afford U.S. products and make their exports cheaper than domestically produced goods. A striking example of the consequences of such policies is the steel industry, where more than 10,000 U.S. jobs were lost in the past year due to a flood of cheap, imported steel.

The North American Free Trade Agreement has compounded the problem, says UAW President Steve Yokich, who chairs the AFL-CIO Executive Council's Manufacturing Industries Committee. "With NAFTA, the good jobs left us and went everywhere else."

In the apparel industry alone, the loss of jobs because of NAFTA has been a "hurricane," says UNITE President Jay Mazur. In the five years since NAFTA was enacted,

apparel imports from Mexico have increased an "astonishing" 500 percent, Mazur says. Textile and apparel companies are rushing to Mexico, and many plan to build huge complexes housing every facet of the manufacturing process.

Facing the challenges ahead

Making labor standards a part of all trade agreements is critical to reversing the race to the bottom. Those standards should include



Job action: Washington State union members rallied in April at the state capitol in support of extending unemployment benefits to laid-off workers who are in training classes.

freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining and prohibition of child labor, forced labor and discrimination in employment. With enforceable labor standards, wages will begin to increase in developing countries and eventually lead to strong domestic markets and economic growth. As a result, developing countries will be able to move away from being exclusively export-driven economies and become economies driven by domestic consumption—allowing them to import more U.S. goods so that trade becomes fair—we buy their goods and they buy ours. They also will be able to buy more of what they produce.

It's all about raising the standard of living globally, says UNITE chief economist Mark Levinson. As a result of current U.S. trade policies, investment is going into countries where real wages are declining. "That's not standard economics. Increased investment is supposed to raise real wages, but that's not happening because these workers don't have rights."

Union leaders say it also will take a comprehensive and innovative program of organizing and collective bargaining to stem the tide of manufacturing decline. The UAW, for example, created a position of vice president for organizing and made organizing a top priority, Yokich says. More than 16 million U.S. manufacturing workers are unorganized (see chart, p. 22). Such organizing also could take place in the growing "intellectual manufacturing" industry, which produces software and intellectual equipment, says Electrical Workers President John Barry.

At the bargaining table, union leaders say a key goal is getting employers to agree to invest in modernizing older plants. By getting management to reinvest capital in its operations, unions can enhance the long-term stability of a plant. In its current negotiations with the Big Three automakers, the UAW again seeks to ensure that new manufacturing techniques are accompanied by upgrading workers' skills and continued investment in established UAW-represented facilities.

Another way to fight the race to the bottom is by investing in companies and taking part, as stockholders, in corporate decision-making. In June, the Machinists launched a mutual fund for investment in IAM-represented companies. "We wanted to create a mechanism to buy shares where members work so we could increase our value to the company and impart our values on company policy," IAM President Thomas Buffenbarger says. "The real bottom line is that we have to make sure the global economy works for everybody, and right now, it's just not working for those of us in manufacturing." @

ment respond to the new global economy and the extent to which government pursues policies that promote fair trade and manufacturing. If companies seek the commitment of their workers, harness their creativity and mine their knowledge to produce high-quality products, Harley will be the future. If management attacks workers to reduce costs by lowering their wages and taking plants out of communities, the future points to Huffy.

Why manufacturing matters

For years, manufacturing jobs have been among the best paid. In 1997, the economy added 254,000 manufacturing jobs. But since 1998, more than 450,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost. Many of those jobs fell victim to the Asian financial crisis, which torpedoed U.S. exports to Asia by forcing currency depreciations and recessions that made U.S. products too expensive and uncompetitive. It also spawned a flood of low-priced imports, especially in steel and textiles.

The effects of the Asian crisis were magnified by policies that have systematically contributed to a decline in manufacturing jobs. This is illustrated by the way companies have used the crisis to move abroad to take advantage of collapsing currencies and low wages, exposing manufacturing jobs to a global race to the bottom.

Traditionally, manufacturing has provided a path to the middle class for American workers. Manufacturing provides "family-supportive jobs," says Steelworkers President George Becker. In January 1998, average weekly earnings in manufacturing were \$565, compared with \$253 in retail and \$430 in the service sector.

As Becker notes, "those jobs have been the ladder to the middle class for many families, and now that ladder is being kicked out from under them."

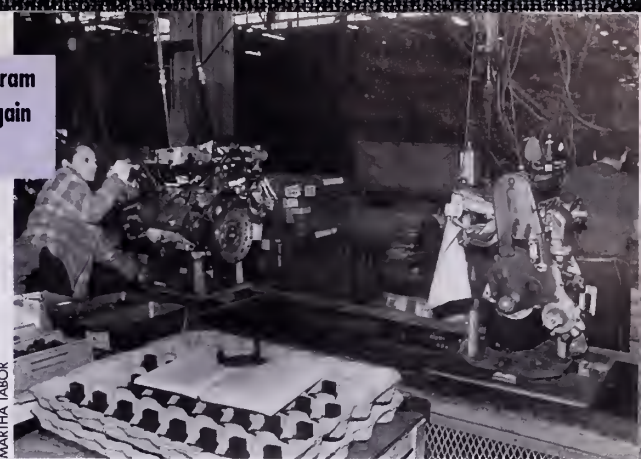
Highly unionized, high-paying manufacturing jobs form the basis for the most rapid productivity growth in the economy—and higher productivity growth creates more wealth and jobs. Between 1992 and 1997, output per hour in the economy rose 4.9 percent, but jumped 13.8 percent in manufacturing.

High-paying manufacturing jobs boost everyone's living standards, as workers spend their wages buying more goods and services that create more jobs throughout the economy.

Managing change: The UAW's extensive job training program allows members and their families to upgrade skills and gain an education to meet the demands of new technology.

The impact of manufacturing jobs reaches even further into the economy: They set wage standards for other jobs. Manufacturing also creates jobs in the supplier industries that support it. Tax dollars generated by manufacturing also support better public services, creating jobs for federal, state and local workers.

Manufacturing jobs are key to our economy. As the manufacturing sector shrinks, workers are cheated out of a higher standard of living. When these jobs go, they don't



come back. That's why managing a growing economy without losing manufacturing jobs is critical for the economic health of the nation—and for America's workers. ☐

Training for the High Road

As work changes to require increasingly high skill levels, training and retraining workers to meet the demands of new technology is essential.

One way unions are doing that is through bargaining for better managed new technology and increased productivity. Neither need necessarily cause a loss of manufacturing jobs; instead, an increase in technology and a skilled workforce can give U.S. companies the tools they need to be more efficient and competitive in the global economy.

One way the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers manages technology so that it benefits workers and management, union President Frank Hurt says, is by negotiating contract language that requires companies to inform members of anticipated technological changes. The union has trained workers to analyze technology decisions so they can advocate a skills-based design that puts control of the new machines in workers' hands.

Unions also are attacking the problem through labor-management training partnerships. The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, established in 1991 by the state federation, is a consortium of labor groups, 40 metal-working firms and the Milwaukee community college system. The program helps retain jobs by upgrading workers' skills through classroom and on-site training. The program helps displaced workers and develops skill standards. Similar programs such as the King County (Wash.) Labor Council Worker Center and the Garment Industry Development Corp., in which UNITE members play a key role, provide training as well as assistance in

developing quality control programs.

Another approach is to negotiate training initiatives in collective bargaining contracts. The UAW long has had an extensive job training program that allows members and their families to upgrade skills and gain education.

This year, Steelworkers President George Becker joined USWA for the opening of a new learning center at the Career Development Program in Steubenville, Ohio, where a joint effort with Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel Co. is under way through the Institute for Career Development. USWA Local 1190 President Larry Mallas says nearly half of the 2,000 Steelworkers at the Steubenville plant have taken at least one class through the program. The career institute is the result of the USWA contract with Wheeling-Pittsburgh and 12 other participating steel companies to upgrade basic skills and education. Since the program was created in 1992, 53 training sites have been built for USWA members.

Electrical Workers establishes joint labor-management cooperative partnerships to implement skills standards, develop job training and retraining programs and to decide on plant modernization issues.

Rapidly advancing technology means workers' skills must be updated constantly. "You can't come out of the eighth grade and get a manufacturing job anymore," says IBEW President John Barry says. "It is time for a new, worker-oriented approach to training in the industrial sector. Programs that impart a broad base of portable skills are the ideal." ☐

CLASS OF '99

BY ARLEE C. GREEN

With its first graduating class, the National Labor College is preparing workers for the next millennium



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

On campus: The National Labor College is located on the Meany Center's 47-acre campus.

America's unions have fought for more than 100 years to provide more education to workers and their families. After struggling for and winning universal education for their children, unions' combined efforts created one of the largest training and apprenticeship systems in the nation. The outgrowth of these successes was the 1997 establishment of the National Labor College at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Silver Spring, Md.

On July 24, the National Labor College's first graduating class will don caps and gowns to receive bachelor of arts degrees to celebrate their success. Most graduates will be the first in their families to receive a college degree. The weekend of festivities, including a cookout and a prom, is a fitting celebration of the students' individual accomplishments. But it is also a weekend that crowns the success and vision of the union movement in enabling workers to enrich their lives and their unions.

The National Labor College carries out that task by being worker-friendly. Its policies and programs adapt well to the lives of its students, who can transfer credits from college courses taken before their education was sidetracked by work and life.

Workers also may earn up to 90 credits for individual life experiences, including military training, apprenticeships and union and job training programs.

For Ann Flener, a July graduate and former president of the Wayne-Holmes Labor Council in Lakeville, Ohio, the Labor College structure "best represents the way to get a first-rate education." Flener received life experience credits for the knowledge she had gained over 20 years as a member of the Rubber Workers and the Steelworkers and the dozen years she headed the labor council.

Flener thinks the worker-friendly structure is key to the success of the Labor College, which received more than 200 requests for applications the first two weeks after the Meany Center website announced its launching. Students can learn at their own pace, attending a week of in-residence instruction at the Meany Center up to four times a year, after which they work independently, completing reading assignments, writing research papers and confering with instructors by e-mail, phone and mail.

"The week you are there, you get so pumped up, it becomes a reality," says Jackie Becton, an Office and Professional Employees Local 2 member who works for the Road Sprinkler Fitters Local 669 in Columbia, Md. "It's a cutting-edge program for working folks."

To help students navigate the program and the independent study, the college provides counseling and a mentoring program. A student union, with officers elected by mail ballot, a student-faculty forum and student pub go a long way toward providing



One on one: BMWWE Local 3095 Chairman Richard Minser Jr. consults with Meany Center staff associate Valerie Ervin.

BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

students with a traditional campus environment.

Campus life—and the hands-on union experience students bring to the college—are what many students say make up the most enriching part of the program, and sets it apart from colleges that offer labor studies as a small part of the curriculum.

"The best part was the interaction with other union leaders and members," says Joe Miller, Painters and Allied Trades business representative for District Council 21 in Harrisburg, Pa. "Learning how they handle situations, the personal experiences, the real-life situations and how things work. It's made me able to deal with change and my members."

Brenda Cantrell, a July graduate, uses her new knowledge on the job as the Meany Center's hazardous materials program coordinator, where she is putting together a plan for organizing with health and safety issues. A member of The Newspaper Guild Local 35/CWA, Cantrell says her life experiences earned nearly 70 credits toward a degree. "It's empowering to get credit for who you are."

Meeting the needs of union activists

The AFL-CIO and its affiliates created the National Labor College to fill the unique mission of meeting the educational needs of union leaders and staff, labor activists and rank-and-file members. It grows from the Meany Center's

first college degree program 25 years ago, run in conjunction with Antioch College of Yellow Springs, Ohio. The Meany-Antioch program, which has produced more than 300 graduates, is being phased out. This summer's graduation of nearly 90 students is almost five times larger than any previous Meany-Antioch graduating class.

The Labor College, which offers labor-related courses as well as the general studies requirements for a college degree, is accredited by the state of Maryland and nearly has completed the rigorous process for regional accreditation. Located on the Meany Center's 47-acre, tree-lined campus, the college includes an extensive labor library and a fully equipped computer lab. To enroll, students need at least 56 semester hours or 84 quarter hours of credit and can transfer up to 135 quarter hours from another institution.

They also may earn up to 36 quarter hours by passing specific exams.

At the college, students complete at least eight labor studies courses and a senior research project to receive a B.A. degree. The college also launched a master's degree program in April with the University of Baltimore, allowing students who complete 36 additional credits to receive master's degrees in public policy and public administration with a concentration in labor studies. One of the key factors that sets the Labor College apart from most academic institutions is the individual

Life credit: The Newspaper Guild Local 35/CWA member Brenda Cantrell, whose life experiences earned nearly 70 credits toward a degree, says it's "empowering to get credit for who you are."



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

approach by faculty and staff members, who work one on one with students to craft a degree program and even help fund travel expenses so that family members can attend graduation. "The people at the college treat you as a person; they remember your name," says Timothy Dailey, 40, a veteran sergeant with the Anne Arundel County, Md., police department and a member of the International Union of Police Associations.

For the union movement, the greatest benefit is the college's ability to develop programs that correspond to the areas of union leadership needs, says Susan Schurman, president of the college and executive director of the Meany Center. The college now offers seven different disciplines: labor studies, labor education, organizational dynamics and growth, political economies of labor, union governance and administration, labor history and labor safety and health. At the request of several unions, it is considering adding urban studies and international affairs programs.

"I believe education is the key to where we are headed in the future and it will determine whether we stay viable as a labor movement," says Carl Cantrell (no relation to Brenda Cantrell), who was the first student to complete his requirements and qualify for graduation. "We are up against people with college educations, master's degrees and Ph.D.s. We need all the brainpower we can get."

Once on campus, students realize that the program is as challenging as a traditional college. "I wouldn't advise anyone to go in thinking it's easy," says Evelyn Holt, a member of AFGE Local 1923 and a July graduate. "You have to want to do it and set time aside for it."

Students from 33 different unions

The Class of '99 reflects the diversity of Labor College students. Ranging in age from 29 to 78, nearly every student who enrolls is squeezing a college education into a schedule that includes a full-time job and daily family responsibilities—a challenge that consumes their evenings, weekends and whatever spare minutes are left. The graduates represent 33 different unions in 25 states, Canada and Panama. Nearly all are active in their unions and a significant number hold elected office or staff jobs.

Holt, 68, is one example. Retired from the federal government, she was

Human touch: Tim Dailey, a member of the International Union of Police Associations, says "the people at the college treat you as a person; they remember your name."



Jazzed: Jackie Becton, Office and Professional Employees Local 2 member, says the Labor College offers "a cutting-edge program for working folks."

elected women's department coordinator with responsibility for a four-state area in AFGE District 4. She's considering running for a nationally elected position in AFGE's Women's Department at the union's international convention next year.

Another July graduate, Chuck Spence, had his heart set on getting a college degree. A senior international representative with PACE International Union, he found a way to work the program into his schedule, which includes representing

19 local unions and 3,600 members. "You never realize how little you know about the labor movement," he points out, "until you go to the National Labor College. Then you learn who paid the price for what we have and how we got there."

Spence, 66, says his grandchildren were the reason he went back to school, and believes they are proud of

what he has done. "I think it's had an impact on them. I think they'll go to college, too," he says.

After graduation, Gil Rojo of Electrical Workers Local 11 in Los Angeles plans to run for business manager of his local and recommends the National Labor College to "anybody in the labor movement. It's extremely satisfying going to school with people from other trades who are oriented [about unions] the same way you are."

For such workers as Rojo who wish to pursue a labor studies education, the future holds even more promise. The labor college, which just received a \$650,000 grant from the state of Maryland, plans to upgrade computer cabling so Internet connections are available in all classrooms and dormitories. An ongoing assessment of affiliates' training programs will provide added opportunities for workers to gain college equivalency credits.

Gregory Giebel, who became provost in May, says the college offers a needed alternative for working families.

"We are in the liberal arts and labor studies tradition, as opposed to the nation's 1,400 business schools that may be beholden to corporate money."

Says Schurman: "We believe the college is helping to build stronger labor organizations and will help labor play its role even more effectively in the 21st century economy." When Flener, Becton, Rojo, Carl Cantrell, Spence, Brenda Cantrell and the other 81 students attending graduation ceremonies this month return to their unions and workplaces, they "will be ready for the challenge of building a new union movement," says Schurman. "Their dedication—and that of thousands of students who will follow—is at the heart of the nation's first labor college." ■



Brainpower: Carl Cantrell believes "education is the key to the future of the union movement."



OSWALDO JIMENEZ

DARBY SZEMORE/SYDERLUP TECHNOLOGY



Making Healthy Choices for

Medicare



WHEN 66-YEAR-OLD BETTY MAGANINIE BECAME eligible for Medicare in 1998, the Colorado Springs, Colo., widow faced an array of coverage options resulting from Medicare rule changes in 1997. As the retired director of a nonprofit agency that assists the elderly with medical insurance problems, including Medicare, Maganinie thought she was well prepared to make an informed decision.

She chose a Medicare-funded HMO with no premiums and small co-payments for physician visits and prescription drugs. About a year later, the HMO “just dropped out of Colorado Springs. Maybe they took the money and ran,” Maganinie says. She’s now paying \$90 a month for a Medicare supplemental plan that doesn’t cover the cost of her \$300-a-month prescriptions.

The problems Maganinie faces are one example of the volatility in the Medicare system. The 1997 changes encouraged HMOs to jump even deeper into the Medicare market. Two years later, Medicare recipients are finding that HMOs have little

BY MIKE HALL

incentive to maintain services when profits are not as high as expected or when clients are sicker—and cost more to serve.

Now a wide-ranging debate—with sharply different choices for the future of Medicare—is heating up. One approach, championed by the White House and Democrats in Congress, proposes to set aside 15 percent of the federal budget surplus to guarantee Medicare’s health care benefits to older Americans. That proposal would secure the Medicare trust fund until 2027, allowing time to make additional changes in the program carefully. The White House also wants to add a prescription drug benefit at a much smaller premium—and with wider coverage—than most private insurers now offer.

Republican leaders in Congress are likely, however, to insist on using the surplus for a big tax cut instead of shoring up Medicare and adding a prescription drug benefit. The showdown is expected this summer when Congress votes on tax legislation.

Many of the proponents of using the surplus for a tax cut instead of Medicare also are pushing a package of harmful Medicare proposals that would exacerbate Medicare’s problems. Their plan is so radical it “will undermine the traditional Medicare program and make it so expensive that many beneficiaries will be unable to stay in the program,” a Families USA analysis of the scheme charges.

Here’s how some of the proposed plans would limit health coverage for seniors:

- Raise the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67 years—potentially eliminating health care for 800,000 to 1.4 million people,

according to Cornell University and others.

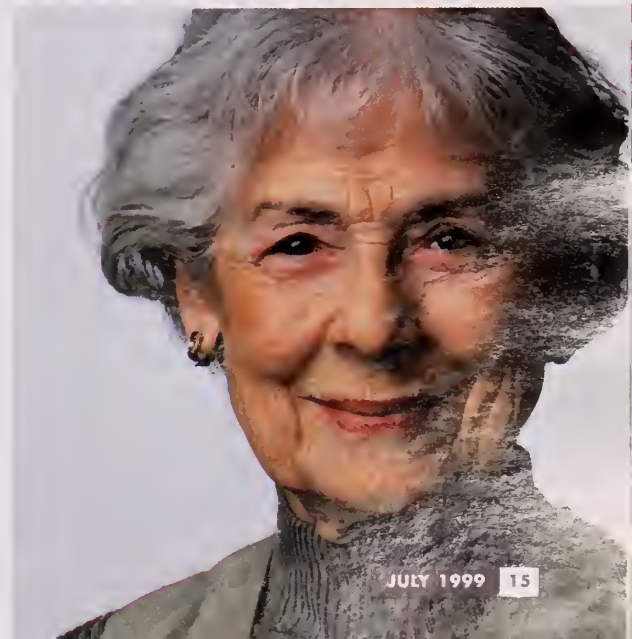
- Eliminate Medicare’s guaranteed benefit for all and replace it with a voucher system.


- Increase the number of seniors in managed care or HMO plans from 25 percent to 75 percent.

- Shift more health care costs to seniors.

While there is almost universal agreement that Medicare must be strengthened, these proposals, by Sen. John Breaux (D-La.) and Rep. Bill Thomas (R-Calif.), were not even backed by 11 of the 18 members of the National Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare. And a broad range of union, senior, family and consumer groups strongly oppose them.

Senior citizen and health care advocates agree that Breaux-Thomas would reduce the scope and quality of care seniors have counted on since Medicare was enacted in 1965. And the scheme ignores coverage for prescription drugs and long-term care, benefits health care advocates consider paramount to improving the system and the quality of care.





Breaux-Thomas: Bad for Health Care Workers

While older Americans face the biggest threat from the Breaux-Thomas plan, the proposal also could be bad for health care workers. Currently, Medicare makes two types of payments to health care facilities: "disproportionate share" (DSH) hospital payments to rural and urban hospitals that care for large populations of uninsured patients, and "graduate medical education" (GME) payments to teaching hospitals.

But under the controversial plan, those payments may be subject to the annual congressional appropriations process, where they would be vulnerable to political pressure and maneuvering.

Such a move "could have a devastating effect on the urban and rural hospitals that train physicians and provide health care of last resort to millions of uninsured Americans," AFSCME President Gerald McEntee said in a letter to the Medicare Commission. "Further, many of the teaching hospitals and urban and rural hospitals that benefit from DSH/GME payments are the very hospitals that treat large numbers of Medicare patients. Without them, millions of elderly could be left stranded."

AFSCME, SEIU, AFT and other unions that represent large numbers of health care workers are fighting to maintain the DSH/GME program within Medicare.

A cornerstone of the nation's health care

Before Medicare was created, 50 percent of the elderly could not afford any type of health insurance. Medicare's 34-year success in providing older Americans essential health security points the way to future strategies for maintaining Medicare as the nation's health care cornerstone.

"Medicare has provided access to quality health care for those Americans least likely to be attractive to private insurers—those over 65, disabled or with kidney disease," explains Nancy-Ann Min DeParle, administrator of the Health Care Financing Administration, which oversees Medicare.

DeParle says the poverty rate among elderly Americans has declined dramatically since Medicare was enacted—from 29 percent in 1966 to 10.5 percent in 1995. And Medicare also provides security across generations—assuring families they will not have to bear the full burden of the health care costs of their elderly or disabled parents or other relatives at the expense of their young families.

Today, 39 million seniors and disabled Americans rely on Medicare for their health insurance. Medicare is the primary health insurance for virtually all people age 65 and older, and covers 5.4 million disabled Americans, according to HCFA.

Medicare coverage is divided into two parts, and each is financed separately. Part A covers inpatient hospital bills, skilled nursing facilities for rehabilitation and hospice care. It is financed through a payroll tax

paid by workers and employers.

Part B pays physician bills, home health care and outpatient costs. It is funded from general government revenues and by individuals, who pay a \$45.50 per month premium. But about two-thirds of Medicare recipients also purchase "medigap" insurance to cover items not paid for by Medicare, such as prescription drugs. Seniors spend an average of 21 percent of their household income—three times more than those younger than 65—on health care.

Breaux-Thomas: Cutting Medicare without saving costs

By 2014, some 12.7 million more people will be covered by Medicare than are covered today, according to HCFA, and these retirees will live longer. Faced with a huge growth in Medicare-eligible retirees, rising health care costs and continuing budget deficits, the Congressional Budget Office warned in 1995 of serious funding problems in Medicare.

But Medicare reforms enacted as part of the 1997 balanced budget agreement will extend the Medicare Trust Fund solvency to 2015. President Clinton's proposal to set aside 15 percent of the nation's growing budget surplus solely for Medicare would extend the fund's solvency through 2027 or longer.

Medicare now offers a defined set of benefits for all, but, under the Breaux-Thomas plan, a so-called premium support voucher would force seniors to pick from several privately run options, most of which will be managed care plans. The proposal gives

health plans the ability to cut corners on benefits, increase the amount of cost sharing and co-payments and establish caps on hospital and home health care.

The proposed plan also would enable private plans to "cherry pick," says Families USA—that is, to enroll the youngest, healthiest beneficiaries. Traditional Medicare would be left with a disproportionate share of older and sicker beneficiaries, and costs would go up.

According to HCFA, restructuring the program to a voucher system would achieve relatively small savings. That means the Breaux-Thomas proposal would create significant structural changes with potentially large unintended consequences—without ensuring the program's long-term stability.

As a report by the Medicare Advocacy Group notes, with the program's future secure for the next two decades, "there is time to think carefully about whether this kind of complete redesign of Medicare is necessary and desirable." ☐

Here's How You Can Take Action

Plans are being developed for worksite leafleting, statewide educational sessions and rallies to give working families the Medicare information they need for lobbying their lawmakers.

Through phone-banking and accountability sessions, working families will urge representatives to back President Clinton's plan to:

- Use 15 percent of the budget surplus to shore up Medicare.
- Add prescription drug coverage to the program.
- Oppose replacing Medicare's guaranteed benefits with a privatized system of vouchers.
- Fight attempts to cap benefits for the elderly and disabled.

Contact your central labor council or Ken Grossinger or Erin O'Neill in the AFL-CIO Legislation Department, 202-637-5057, for event planning information.



Changing to organize: Kate Keller got her start as a UFCW organizer after an internship with the AFL-CIO Union Summer program.

UNION SUMMER

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

Union Summer interns have taken the skills they learned back to their college campuses, their communities and their unions, where they are working to ban sweatshops from exploiting workers, give the homeless a voice and build the union movement

Snapshots

Three years ago, hundreds of interns in a new program called Union Summer joined organizing campaigns across the country, part of an ambitious AFL-CIO effort to reach out to the next generation of activists to help bring social and economic justice to workplaces and communities.

Today, more than 1,700 Union Summer interns have learned firsthand what it takes to be a force for social change—from the

commitment and drive needed to propel a campaign to the nuts and bolts of an effective house call. The intensive, four-week internship places college students and rank-and-file union members in a program that combines seminars on such topics as the history and theory of the union and civil rights movements with hands-on grassroots action. The interns are placed with local unions to help workers organize, mobilize for first contracts and enlist

community support for workers.

"What the Union Summer interns lack in experience, they make up for in hard work and enthusiasm," says Bill Cruice, staff counsel at Health Professionals and Allied Employees/AFT in Philadelphia. In 1997, Union Summer interns helped HPAE/AFT mobilize 300 people for a rally supporting nurses negotiating a first contract in Mount Holly, N.J. The nurses eventually got a contract that improved their working conditions.

Union Summer also is about building the future. "Students see the union movement as *the* place to fight the fight for social justice," says Gordon Lafer, professor at the University of Oregon's Labor Education and Research Center in Eugene. "Union Summer is one of the keys to tap into energy for a whole variety of things: support for campus workers, anti-sweatshop campaigns, support for living wage ordinances and support for organizing drives in their cities. What they do at Union Summer is just the beginning."

Union Summer "alumni" have taken these skills back to their college campuses, their unions and their communities and used them in campaigns to ban sweatshops from exploiting workers, help give the homeless a voice and build the union movement by assisting workers fighting to form unions.

Here's a small sample of what Union Summer graduates are achieving.

Union organizing: Kate Keller

Like many Union Summer interns, Kate Keller, 23, came to the program in 1996 after experiencing first-

Community building: Working with unions and a Chicago homeless coalition, Natasha Dunn credits her leadership skills to Union Summer.

hand why workers need a voice on the job.

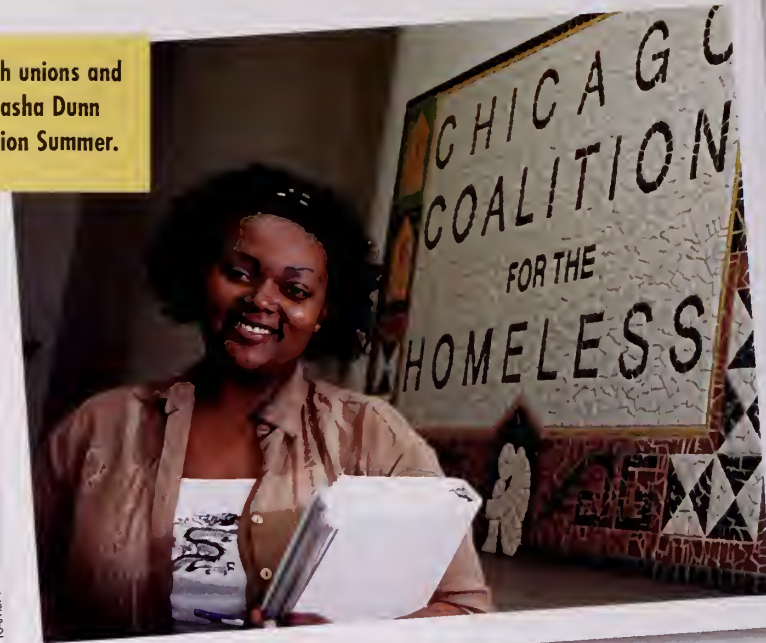
"During college, I used to work in a nonunion supermarket in Pittsburgh," she says. "There were a lot of women working there for five years who were making \$5 an hour with no benefits. They were on food stamps." While still a student at Pennsylvania State University, Keller helped organize high school and college students to support the workers' ultimately successful unionization effort.

That experience "hooked her on activism," Keller says, and she switched her major from athletic training to labor relations. Through a Union Summer internship in Detroit, Keller helped organize solidarity actions with locked-out *Detroit News* workers as well as with campaigns by the Operating Engineers, the Carpenters and the Food and Commercial Workers. She stayed on as a Union Summer assistant site coordinator in Akron, Ohio, and followed up with increasingly more responsible positions in Chicago and Washington, D.C.

"I learned about house calling, which is probably the most important skill in organizing," Keller says. "And I learned how to be a big mouth at rallies and picket lines."

Now Keller uses those skills to organize workers with UFCW Local 400 in the Washington, D.C., area. The local union's Market Share program regularly mobilizes 200 rank-and-file members to leaflet neighborhoods and nonunion stores to get the message out about the importance of shopping at union stores. "The challenge is to make it clear to members that they will get a better contract if more stores are union," Keller says.

In addition to honing her practical skills, Union Summer helped deepen Keller's commitment to organizing. "Union Summer has changed the lives of so many young people, helping them realize that they themselves can make change—and unions are the best avenue to make change."



DAVID KAMBA

Community empowerment: Natasha Dunn

For Natasha Dunn, there is a close connection between the work she does as youth coordinator for the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and her experience working on the living wage campaign in the Windy City during her Union Summer internship three years ago.

"The living wage campaign had a lot to do with homelessness," says Dunn, who was in college at the time. "People who work and yet don't earn a living wage become homeless," she says. Spearheaded by SEIU Local 880, the campaign resulted in raising wages for employees of city service contractors and subcontractors to \$7.60 an hour. It helped Dunn learn that "the basic organizing strategies of identifying leaders and making sure they organize themselves is similar" when talking with workers or community activists. She uses those strategies when she organizes homeless young people to speak to congregations and unions and when she works with local unions to support low-income housing issues.

The skills Dunn learned during Union Summer also proved useful after she returned to her campus, Shaw University in North Carolina. When students were angry about campus safety and expensive health insurance, Dunn helped organize a sit-in at the administration building and was one of a small group to meet with the university president, who agreed to the students' demands the next day.

"Union Summer pushes and challenges the inner you," she says. "I love organizing. It's been brought out in me and it's going to stay."



Mobilizing workers: UFCW organizer Kate Keller sees unions as the key to improving workers' lives.

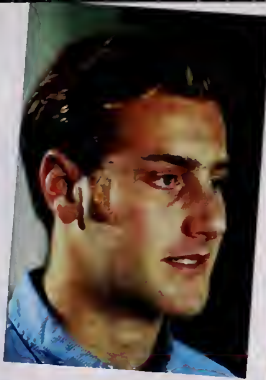
Campus mobilizing: Peter Romer-Friedman

Some of Union Summer's 1,700 graduates are helping imbue college campuses with activist energy. In fact, Union Summer graduates have been instrumental in the campus-based anti-sweatshop movement, says Ginny Coughlin, UNITE campaign coordinator. "We owe it all to Union Summer," she says. The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor illustrates her point.

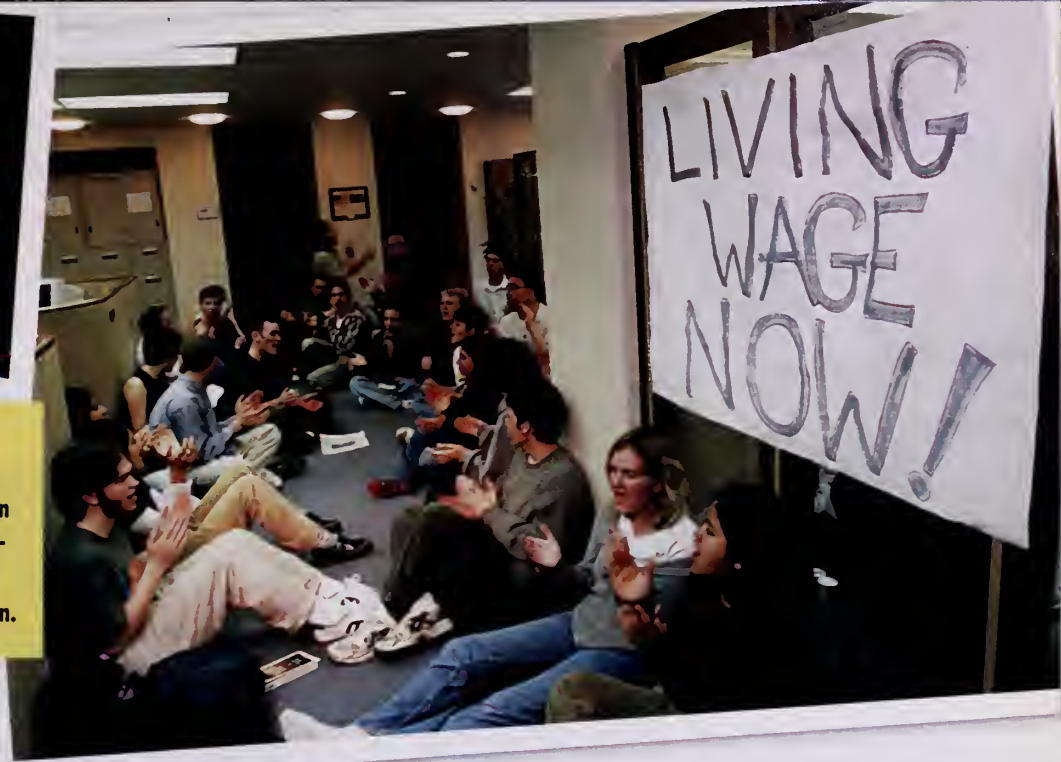
In March, student activists there staged a sit-in at the university president's office in an effort to get college officials to sign a tough anti-sweatshop policy. They were victorious, securing a commitment for full disclosure of manufacturing shops' locations, the strongest such provision in the country. Seven of the "No-Sweat 30" activists were Union Summer graduates.

One of the campus activists, Peter Romer-Friedman, 19, says Union Summer brings much-needed continuity to progressive campus groups, which sometimes can fizzle out when the most experienced students graduate. Romer-Friedman spent his Union Summer internship last year in New Orleans with HOTROC, the joint hospitality industry organizing campaign by the Hotel

Lesson plan: Union Summer graduate Peter Romer-Friedman has spearheaded campus activism at the University of Michigan.



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE



JIM WEST

Employees & Restaurant Employees and SEIU. "I'd hear stories from women who have worked in the same hotel for 25 years and still only earn \$7.50 an hour," he says. "Employers don't have to pay a living wage unless workers demand it."

After returning to school, Romer-Friedman co-founded SOLE, Students Organizing for Labor and Economic Equality. When a recruiter from the *Detroit News* was on campus interviewing student journalists for internships, SOLE's protests

caused the interviews to be rescheduled.

Romer-Friedman says he uses the tools he learned during Union Summer every day. "Whether you're organizing workers or organizing students, you have to move people and give them a reason to want more than the status quo," he says. @

For more information about Union Summer, visit www.aflcio.org/unionsummer or call 800-952-2550.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

As a union member-organizer, **Lorraine Donnelly** (Cleveland, 1998) already had chalked up experience with SEIU Local 47 and HERE Local 10 when she became a Union Summer intern. Now back at her job as a cleaner for the Cleveland School Board, Donnelly uses the skills she learned during Union Summer to train member-organizers. Her Union Summer experience led her to join the Coalition of Labor Union Women, and she now is planning to aid an upcoming local UNITE organizing campaign. "I'm definitely a better organizer now," she says.

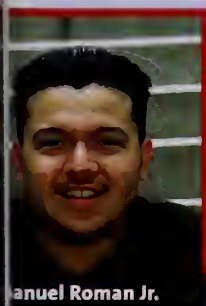
At Whittier College near downtown Los Angeles, **Manuel Roman Jr.** (Watsonville, Calif., 1998) has raised awareness about sweatshops and recruited students to march in honor of Farm Workers founder César Chávez's birthday. "Students are looking for an outlet to be politically active," he says. "Union Summer was my way to get my foot in the door."

Eben Pullman (Denver, 1998) works with Jobs With Justice on its living wage efforts in Independence, Ore., and on a campaign countering a business-led drive to weaken the state's new minimum-wage law. "I learned the basics of organizing and the personal skills you develop," he says of his Union Summer experience. His desire for social justice always was there, "but Union Summer filled in the organizing and planning part."

After spending last summer with the organizing campaign at Los Angeles International Airport, **Jon Lansang** returned to the University of California at Riverside as the United States Student Association's labor-community liaison and as national affairs director in his campus's student council. He has mobilized support for the unionization efforts of the university's graduate students, organizing a candlelight vigil and union-themed Christmas caroling in front of the chancellor's house. "Union Summer helped me solidify my decision to go into union organizing and keep up the fight for social justice," Lansang says.



Lorraine Donnelly

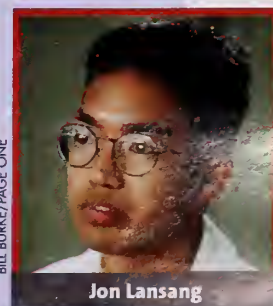


Manuel Roman Jr.



Eben Pullman

SHAN GORDON



Jon Lansang

BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

LIKE IT IS

The ABCs of Y2K

When the Year 2000 (Y2K) "bug" hits on New Year's Day, how will it affect union members? Some experts predict wholesale economic disruptions, while others think the scare is overblown. The fact is, no one can say for sure what will happen.

Yet the Y2K threat is significant. Many computers are programmed to exclude the century when recognizing dates. When the calendar rolls over, the resulting "00" may cause the systems, especially those reliant on older software, to read "1900." For example, a computer program that has not been made Y2K compliant might recognize a 68-year-old union retiree who was born in 1931 as 31 years old on Jan. 1, 2000—and therefore not eligible for a pension.

While large organizations have the resources to anticipate and fix problems, Jack Gribben warns that some smaller entities may regret taking a wait-and-see approach. "If it turns out your systems are not Y2K compliant, you could be at the end of a very long line waiting for parts and assistance," says Gribben, spokesman for the President's Council on Y2K Conversion, the panel responsible for coordinating federal efforts to address the Y2K problem.

Y2K poses special problems for unions, which process a wealth of financial data, such as membership dues, purchases, payroll and strike benefits. This information is date-sensitive and vulnerable if stored and transmitted with outdated systems. Any disruption along the financial data chain could add costs and delays in getting out pension checks, while fund investments in multinationals and foreign countries could suffer from a global lack of Y2K readiness.



Alan Parham, administrator of the Laborers District Council and Construction Industry Pension Fund of Philadelphia, says unions need to keep fund participants informed of steps they are taking to ensure systems will not be disrupted.

While many analysts focus on Y2K's impact on the high-tech sector, basic industries risk being overlooked. "In the manufacturing realm, we have a higher probability of a manager saying, 'This is a software problem and doesn't affect me,'" even if the shop floor is automated, says Dean Sims, director of

Raytheon Systems Co.'s Y2K Service Center and author of *How to 2000*. But it will affect union members if they can't get their work done until the production line starts moving again.

Many unions early on took the necessary steps to prepare, making their systems Y2K-compliant while modernizing their computer systems and upgrading hardware and software. The AFL-CIO incorporated compliance features when it began converting from mainframe to network computing in 1996.

Jim Moran, the Machinists' director of information systems, says his union updated software for Y2K compliance as it, too, converted from mainframe computers to a network. Because much of IAM's software is written in-house, it was easier to update at headquarters and in the field. But many IAM locals are rushing to upgrade their own software systems. "We have auditors working with the locals to make sure their systems are current," Moran says.

As Sims notes, taking early steps toward compliance may prevent systems from malfunctioning on Jan. 1. ☐

—David Kameras

GETTING Y2K READY

Here are several recommendations from the AFL-CIO Information Technology Department that your union can follow to ensure Y2K compliance:

- Verify computerized per capita, membership and accounting programs for date-related compliance. Most local union Y2K challenges will be limited to desktop hardware and software, but union offices on networks may wish to use a consultant.
- For computers that aren't networked, several free Internet downloads are available to assess and correct the system's internal clock—just perform a search on "Y2K" to find a selection. Additional programs, generally under \$50, can identify and fix many software problems. Recom-

mended titles include "Check 2000 PC Deluxe" (Greenwich Mean Time), "2000 Toolbox" (Network Associates) and "Norton 2000" (Symantec).

- Go to your software vendor's website, which often provides the latest and most comprehensive information on compliance. Moran notes that organizations with which unions often share data, such as banks, can help you test your systems.
- A helpful website is PC Magazine Online (<http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/special/y2k>), which features articles on "Testing Your PC Hardware" and "Steps to Mitigate Y2K Problems." Other recommended sites include www.y2kbase.com (compliance database for consumers),

www.it2000.com (a "bulletin board," a computerized meeting place for leaving and receiving messages and for uploading and downloading files) and www.year2000.com ("Year 2000 Information Center").

- The AFL-CIO Information Technology Department recently provided a Y2K information kit to affiliates. This package contains the federation's Y2K plan, a self-assessment checklist, sample letter to vendors for Y2K certification and websites for downloading a free compliance test. The kit includes Y2K compliance statements for Corel, Microsoft, Lotus and Novell. Central labor councils should contact their state federations for a copy of the kit. ☐

New York Rat Smells Trouble

In New York City, a 30-foot-tall inflatable rat—a tough ex-con who just did 36 days in the city slammer—stands ready to expose irresponsible contractors.

The rat was arrested in April when dozens of Asbestos, Lead and Hazardous Waste Laborers Local 78 members took it to CBS headquarters on West 52nd Street to protest the company's use of

nonunion labor on a construction project. Securely tethered on a legally parked flatbed truck, the beady-eyed rodent drew quite a crowd as it peered into the communication conglomerate's third-floor offices. That's when the rat was busted. Also arrested: Local 78 member Fred Bianchi, charged with disorderly conduct when he tried to explain the U.S. Constitution's guarantee of freedom of speech.

Local 78 President Sal Speziale says the rat is an effective prop. "It symbolizes 'there's something wrong here.' People don't want it sitting outside their offices too long."

After the rally, police refused to return the rat, so the union filed suit in federal court charging Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and other city officials with violating the workers' free speech and free assembly rights. Federal District Court Judge Lewis Kaplan ordered the rat released in May, and a municipal judge dismissed the charges against Bianchi.

Speziale says the rat, which he thinks is the nation's biggest, has no name. How does Rudy sound? ☺



Rats! A union prop stands tough in the face of imminent arrest.

WILLIAM FLEMING

In Perfect Harmony

Some 25 members of Congress joined more than 100 vocalists and instrumentalists to sing the praises of the National Endowment for the Arts on the Capitol steps in May. Organized by the Musicians Union, the congressional Sing-Along raised the voices of legislators and working families in support of federal funding for the arts and for an increase in the NEA's budget.

"The link between the arts and the federal government is a powerful tradition within the American cultural experience, including those who have been marginalized rather than celebrated as a crucial part of the American family," says folk singer Peter Yarrow, a member of AFM locals 82 and 100 and the musical group Peter, Paul and Mary.

AFM President Steve Young reminded the crowd that "the National Endowment for the Arts is important to our members and critical to our nation's cultural growth."

Encouraged by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) to "sing loud enough" so their detractors would hear them, the crowd sang such classic American tunes as "Blowing in the Wind," "This Land is Your Land" and "Puff, the Magic Dragon." ☺



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE PHOTOGRAPHY

A hum-dinger: Singers Anita Baker and Deborah Gibson lead a Capitol Hill crowd in song, with Rep. Collin Peterson (D-Minn.) and folk singer Peter Yarrow on guitar, Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.) on harmonica and AFM Legislative Director Alfonso Pollard on percussion.

THE ATLANTA JOURNAL AND CONSTITUTION

Fired Up

When Atlanta Fire Fighter Matt Mosely scooped a stranded crane operator from the flames

while hanging suspended by helicopter over a burning five-story building in April, his courageous and successful rescue became front page news across the country. And Mosely transformed the instant fame his action generated into an opportunity to expose how the city's low-paid firefighters risk their lives daily with insufficient and obsolete equipment.

After the rescue, Mosely appeared with Mayor Bill Campbell on the "Today" show, where he urged the mayor to meet with his union and confront long-standing problems in the city's fire department. Campbell agreed. "The mayor made it clear that he wanted to mend old wounds and move ahead," says Local 134 President David Rhodes.

After meeting with the union's executive board, Campbell promised to give firefighters a bonus to compensate for their loss of pay parity with police in 1999 and to restore parity in the 2000 budget. He also pledged to replace their outdated breathing apparatus by Aug. 31, address staffing levels and resolve delays in equipment purchases. ☺

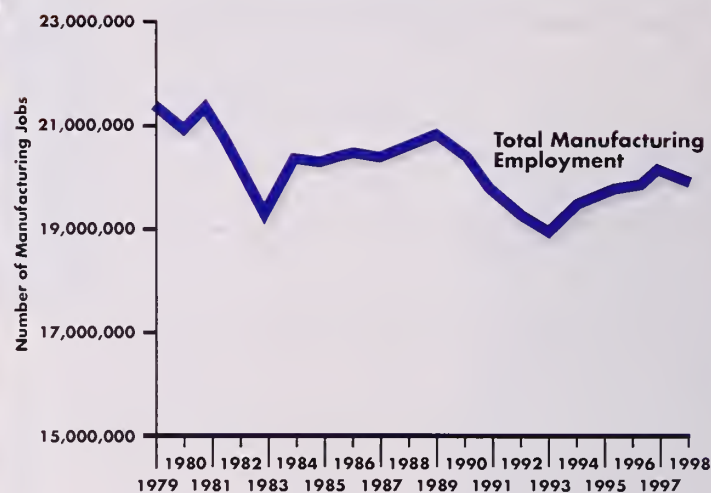


Lifeline: Fire Fighter Matt Mosely's daring rescue saved a life and generated support for union safety concerns that could save more lives in the future.

Making Manufacturing Work

In the heavily unionized manufacturing industry, jobs traditionally have been family-supportive because workers have had the collective strength to negotiate good wages and health and pension benefits. Highly paid manufacturing workers help build strong communities by spending wages that create more jobs and contribute to the tax base. Organizing within the industry will ensure workers and their communities maintain that strength.

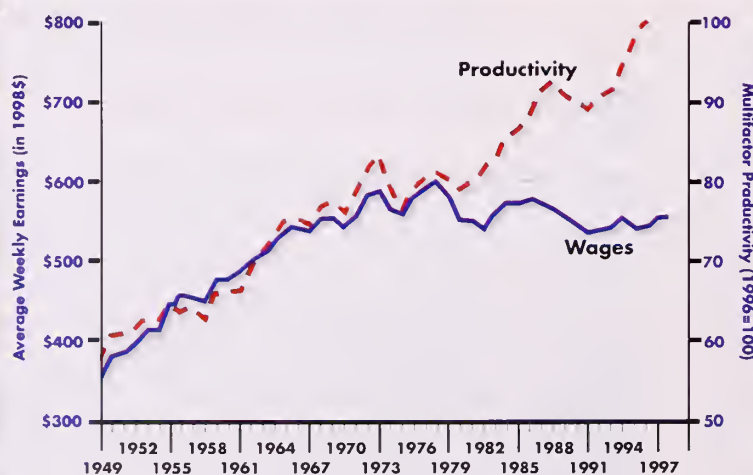
The Number of Good Union Jobs Declines



The total number of manufacturing jobs, especially union jobs, has fallen over the past 20 years as companies downsized and moved unionized plants overseas.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

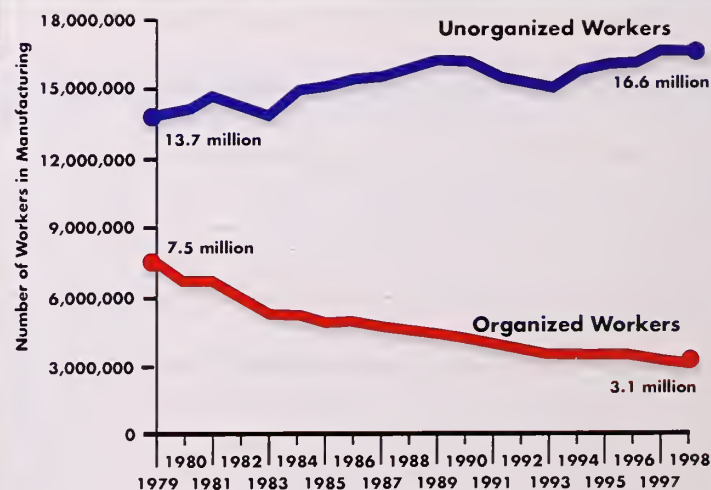
Working Harder But Not Sharing in the Wealth



Manufacturing productivity has skyrocketed, resulting in bigger profits for company owners. But workers have not shared in that wealth.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

Organizing the Manufacturing Industry Increases Union Strength



Most new manufacturing plants are nonunion. Organizing within the industry is critical to regaining the collective strength that has enabled working families to have a voice at the workplace.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

PUBLICATIONS

From the Telegraph to the Internet by Morton Bahr (National Press Books Inc., Washington, D.C.) \$24.95

Joseph Beirne, founding president of the Communications Workers of America, once told a reporter that "labor unionism is a movement of the people, not just a legal structure. A union leader who lacks feeling ought to be doing something else."

Morton Bahr, who has great admiration for Beirne, fits Beirne's definition of a labor leader. For

Bahr, as for Beirne, the complex and constantly growing union that is CWA is first and foremost a "movement of the people."

Bahr's timely and absorbing story of CWA demonstrates that the union movement is destined to become stronger and more innovative and effective in the new millennium. As the president of a union at the cutting edge of the global communications revolution, he is eager to adopt new and creative strategies and tactics aimed at equipping CWA, and the entire union movement, to meet the emerging challenges.

Bahr's story of CWA only could have been written by a labor leader who has been there for many years and who has done it all from the ground up. *From the Telegraph to the Internet* is a superb book from every point of view. I recommend it enthusiastically as required reading for anyone who wants to know where unions, under such leaders as Bahr, are heading.

—Msgr. George G. Higgins
The Catholic University of America

Soul of a Citizen: Living With Conviction in a Cynical Time by Paul Rogat Loeb, examines individual democratic participation—what motivates a person to get involved in "big picture" issues. Loeb, a scholar associated with Seattle's Center for Ethical Leadership, combines 30 years of research on citizen responsibility and empowerment with profiles of ordinary citizens to show the difference one person can make. He outlines simple steps to get involved and underscores two

EXHIBIT

Sweatshops, a powerful exhibit of artwork by New York City public school students, often reflects their own experiences as children of sweatshop workers. The 42 student artworks were shown in May and June at Bread and Roses Gallery 1199, and 20 mounted copies now are available as a traveling exhibit. Bread and Roses is a cultural project of 1199 National Health and Human Service Employees Union, SEIU. The exhibit recently traveled to UNITE's national conference in Miami and to Mexico, where a delegation from the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition examined the maquiladoras. The exhibit is sponsored by Bread and Roses, UNITE's Stop Sweatshops campaign, the Labor-Religion Coalition and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. To show the exhibit at union meetings or other events, contact Staci Lightburn at 212-631-4569.

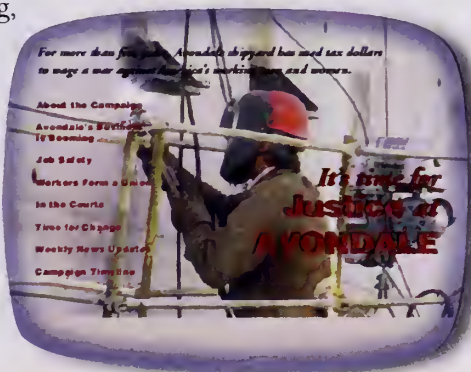


SOFA ROTCHKO LAGUARDIA

main points: personal satisfaction is the reward for being involved, and a person does not have to be totally immersed in an issue to be effective. \$15.95. St. Martin's Press.

WEBSITINGS

- www.justiceatavondale.org—The Justice at Avondale campaign site explains why 5,000 highly skilled shipyard workers still don't have the union they voted for in 1993 and why Avondale Industries gets billions of dollars in U.S. Navy shipbuilding contracts despite its ongoing, illegal, anti-worker campaign and the industry's worst safety and health record. Workers at Avondale earn far less than other shipyard workers, and a



worker with 30 years on the job can retire with an \$83-a-month pension. Check out the site to find out how workers at Avondale are struggling for their freedom to have a voice on the job.

- www.blank.org/sweatgear—Through humor, the site's "SweatGear" catalogue describes El Salvador sweatshops and the workers who make the products that consumers eagerly buy. The site is sponsored by CISPES, a national organization of concerned U.S. citizens offering support and solidarity to the workers of El Salvador.

- www.unionist.com—The website of Union Communication Services Inc. provides a labor cartoon and labor song of the week. Through UCS, local unions can subscribe to a graphics service and news service and receive a catalog of labor-oriented books, a bimonthly *Steward Update* newsletter and *The Union Steward's Complete Guide*. ☐

CLUW Seeks News on Working Women's Awareness Week

The Coalition of Labor Union Women asks unions and CLUW chapters to send in articles, media coverage, photographs or other materials from their publications that covered activities held during Working Women's Awareness Week May 10–16. The CLUW News wants to include them in its July-August issue. Send materials to CLUW News, 1126 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 or fax to 202-776-0537.

Come to Seattle and Stand Up for

WORKERS' RIGHTS

The World Trade Organization is holding its first-ever U.S. meeting Nov. 30-Dec. 3. That's when trade ministers and heads of state from all over the world will define the international trade agenda for decades to come.

The Seattle WTO conference is a crucial opportunity for the U.S. union movement to join with allies to mobilize for workers' rights and more equitable global trade and investment rules.

While in Seattle, we will tell trade ministers that:

- Every worker is entitled to basic human rights: a minimum age for child labor; freedom from forced or compulsory labor; a workplace free from discrimination; freedom of association; and the right to join together and bargain collectively to balance the overwhelming power of global capital.
- We need strong, enforceable international rules to stop the devastating race to the bottom in labor standards as well as consumer and environmental protections.
- Current international trading rules reward corporations and governments that abuse workers' rights rather than reinforcing respect for human rights.

That's why WTO rules must be overhauled to guarantee workers' basic rights are enforced and reverse the inequities in the current global economic system.

Find out how your union can take part by calling the

AFL-CIO Field Mobilization Department, 202-637-5280.

To receive a WTO Ministerial Information Kit, which

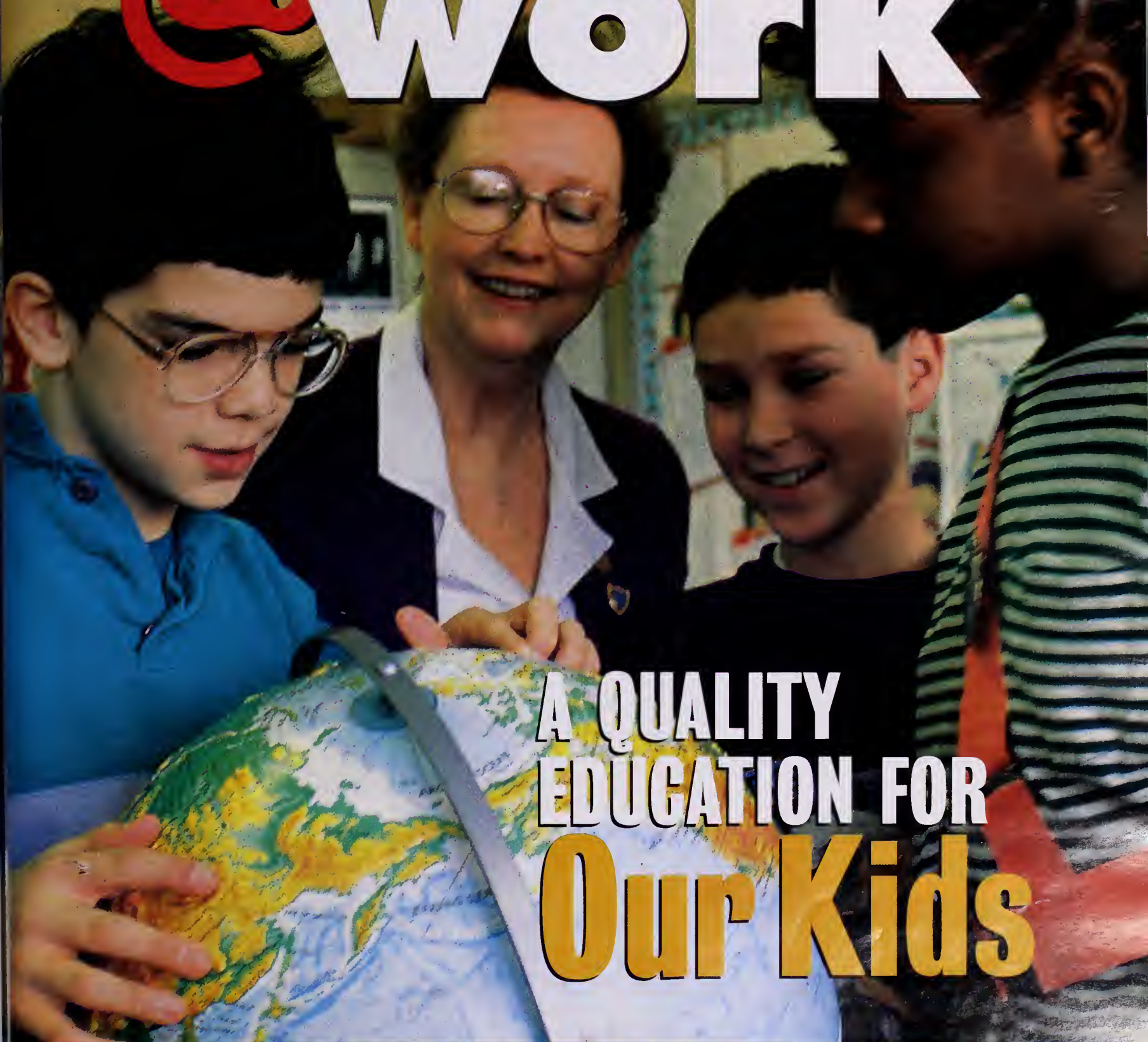
includes a background paper, brochure, talking points,

resolution and petition, call 202-637-5042.

Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

AUGUST 1999

America @work



A QUALITY
EDUCATION FOR
Our Kids

INSIDE: • 7 Days in June • A Chance to Fix Our Schools • Talking Union to Your Kids

IDEAS AND VIEWS FROM YOU

The following is excerpted from an article by Edward J. Durand about former Ladies Garment Workers Local 173 President Ida Cabral. For a full copy of the article, contact Citizens for Citizens, a nonprofit, anti-poverty agency, 508-679-0041.

"...[T]HOSE OF US WHO ROOT for the laborers of our society can count ourselves very fortunate that Ida was born and raised in Fall River [Mass.] and chose to stay and make her contribution here....Ida began work at the age of 16. She made buttonholes, and at the end of the week she earned \$8. It was the 1940s, and the young woman understood that if workers were to bring home anything near a decent wage, they would have to unionize...."

"Ida is not exactly a shrinking violet, and because of that, thousands of women who worked in the sewing shops are eternally grateful. The rights of workers always have had a high priority on Ida's rather large agenda....At 74, Ida Cabral can't retire. There is too much to do....She is second vice president of Citizens for Citizens and is still pushing the voter registration effort she began many years ago.... Looking for a role model for the 21st century? Ida should be high on that list, always putting the common good ahead of her own personal ambitions."

"IN FEBRUARY, the King County Labor Council...and Seattle Union Now...in partnership with Jobs with Justice launched our right to organize campaign. Leaders from our local unions, community groups and religious organizations came together...to strategically map out the right to organize as a commonly recognized right. The group agreed, when workers have a voice at their workplace, they can effect changes in wages, benefits, dignity, respect and job safety issues. This creates liveable wage jobs and an environment where workers can be productive. Workers are the community!"—Verlene Wilder, Union Cities organizer, King County Labor Council, Seattle

Say What?

How is your union getting kids involved in the union movement?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue.

America@work

815 16th St., N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20006

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Fax: 202-508-6908

e-mail: atwork@afcio.org

Here's What You Say

ABOUT THE ACTIONS YOUR UNION IS TAKING TO BUILD ON THE MOMENTUM WORKING FAMILIES GENERATED IN THE 1998 ELECTIONS:

"The Michigan State AFL-CIO began educating, mobilizing and strategizing for political victory in 2000 at its Executive Council political retreat April 7-8 in Ypsilanti, Mich....[President] Frank Garrison... commented that Michigan was a winner from the top of the ticket to the bottom in 1996. In 1998, we did not do well; our goal in the year 2000 is to contact every union member in every worksite....Organizing, educating, mobilizing and building coalitions are the successful strategies Michigan affiliates will begin to implement NOW for a political victory in 2000."—Bertha Louise Poe, secretary-treasurer, Michigan State AFL-CIO, Lansing

When you see
unions@work
and our
members@work
and collective power
in our
communities@work,
that's when you see

America@work

"I READ WITH GREAT INTEREST the article in America@work titled 'Launching a New Alliance.' This article is very exciting, but then change for the better is always exciting....I recognize many aspects of the New Alliance because it is fashioned after our own Jobs with Justice movement....I am also pleased that one of the seven points for building on success is encouraging local unions to participate fully in their state and local federations with the support of the international unions. It has been very disheartening to see per capita dues withheld from institutions of labor because of petty differences. "I look forward to embracing the ideas the New Alliance. The Committee 2000 members have proven themselves to be visionaries and strong leaders for the new millennium."—Cora Moore, Communications Workers Local 3250, Atlanta

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in America@work.

America@work

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America@work (ISSN 1091594X) is designed to inspire and support front-line union leaders and activists with tips, tools and news you can use in the fight to build a strong voice for America's working families. It is the official publication of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and is issued 11 times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C.
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4 CURRENTS

Pillowtex Cannon workers score victory
Labor in the Pulpits
A sweatfree campaign

20 HEART OF THE MOVEMENT

Danger: Educated union member

21 OUT THERE

Rocky vs. Smith Barney
The union calling card

22 SHOPTALK

Tapping into \$4 million a year in union scholarships

23 HOMEPAGE

Exhibit: *Not a Fair Trade for All*
Publications: *Ravenswood*
Conference: "Best Practices in Ergonomics"
Television: *New Livelyhood* season

8

LESSON PLAN

Boosting student achievement in classrooms across the country means reducing class size, improving teachers' skills, rebuilding crumbling schools and fighting such privatization schemes as vouchers

12

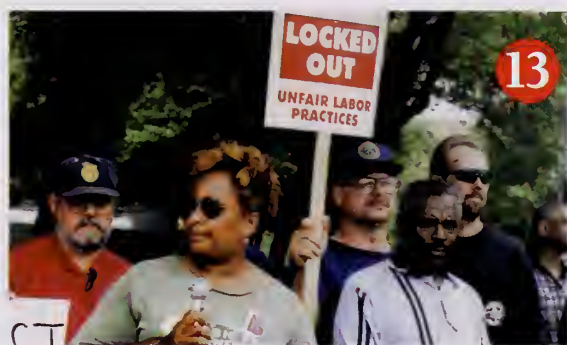
FINALLY, A CHANCE TO FIX OUR SCHOOLS

Students' learning, safety and discipline are negatively affected by overcrowded classrooms and crumbling schools—and unions are working for legislation to boost the nation's public schools

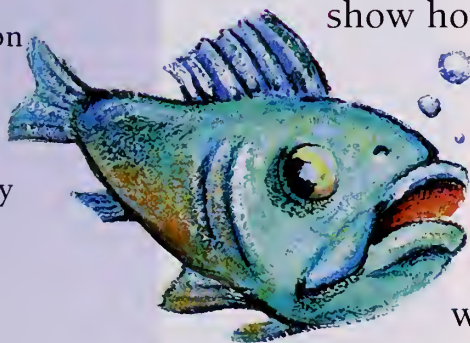
13

7 DAYS IN JUNE

Tens of thousands of union members, workers seeking to join unions and community activists took part in more than 120 events in 38 states June 19–25 to high-



light workers' efforts to join together in unions—and show how employers are waging a war against them



16

A HARD ACT TO FOLLOW

As part of the Solidarity Kids Theater in Minnesota, children sing, dance and act their way to a fun learning experience about the struggles of workers and the meaning of the union movement

18

TALKING UNION TO YOUR KIDS

You already know that unions improve the lives of workers and their families. But do your children know too?

Labor in the Pulpits

The shared values of unions and the religious community will be raised as one voice this Labor Day weekend when hundreds of union members and religious leaders deliver messages on the need for dignity, respect and justice in the workplace and the freedom of workers to choose a union.

More than 50 central labor councils are recruiting speakers and congregations to participate in Labor in the Pulpits, now in its third year. The AFL-CIO and the National Interfaith Committee on Worker Justice sponsor Labor in the Pulpits, which seeks to strengthen the historic ties between the union and religious communities and to renew commitments to seek social justice in the workplace.

"I am struck by the depth of the impact it has on people, those folks who come up to you after the service to thank you for the message or to tell you how the union changed their life or what it meant to their family," says Don Turner, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor, which has taken part in the program for the last three years.

Labor in the Pulpits: Labor Day Organizing Kit and Worship Resources guide is available from the AFL-CIO Support Services Department at 202-637-5042. ☐

A Sweatfree CAMPAIGN

The nationwide campaign to stop colleges from purchasing T-shirts and other products made in sweatshops is spreading to elementary and high schools. The Sweatfree New York Schools Campaign, launched by a coalition of New York labor, religious and community groups, is working to get school systems to adopt a code of conduct agreeing they will not deal with manufacturers who use sweatshop labor to produce school apparel. Teaching students about child labor is also a key part of the campaign.

One of the first to adopt the code is the Catholic Diocese of Albany, which includes 42 schools. "If a company does not reveal under what conditions the apparel they pur-

chase was made," says Bishop Howard Hubbard, "then we will unite conscience and community and buy from a different company."

For a copy of the code of conduct or a list of material to use in the classroom, contact the coalition at 518-459-4500; fax 518-454-6414 or visit the United Federation of Teachers website at www.crisny.org/not-for-profit/nylabrel. ☐

New York State Labor-Religion Coalition Coordinator Brian O'Shaughnessy (center) at a recent UFT/AFT convention.



IF IT'S SUMMER, IT MUST BE UNION

Wherever workers are fighting for a voice on the job—including Puerto Rico, where tens of thousands of public employees are organizing under a new collective bargaining law, and in the south, where poultry workers are seeking the freedom to choose a union—Union Summer interns are joining in their struggle while gaining skills they'll use as future organizers on campus and in their unions and communities.

Two hundred interns—from Los Angeles to Chicago and Stamford, Conn.—are taking part in the fourth Union Summer, a month-long internship in which college students and union members learn about the union movement by assisting on organizing campaigns. In the south, eight AFL-CIO Union

Summer participants visited a dozen Tyson Foods plants, part of a Poultry Justice Caravan. The "summeristas" were sponsored by Food and Commercial Workers and the Poultry Justice Organizing Campaign.

In Philadelphia, 18-year-old Ginger Gentile helped mobilize members of the Health Professionals and Allied Employees/AFT and community allies for a rally supporting striking nurses at Episcopal Hospital, run by Temple University Health System.

"I explained the way to fight corporations was for people to band together," says Gentile. Through Union Summer, "I felt I got an education that I didn't get in high school or so far in college." ☐

At work: Union interns help mobilize HPAE/AFT members and community allies support striking nurses at Episcopal Hospital in Philadelphia.

PATRICK SCOTT

Clean Sweep for UAW

Graduate student employees and administration officials of the University of California system will spend the summer on campus not only preparing lesson plans but talking about union contracts. The 10,000 readers, tutors and teaching assistants at all eight campuses chose to join the Association of Student Employees/UAW and will spend the summer conducting member surveys and developing proposals as they begin contract negotiations. Key issues are workload, the grievance procedure, health care coverage, fee remissions, wages and cost of living increases, according to the union.

"This is fantastic," said UC-Santa Cruz graduate student Leah Mundell after the last votes were counted. "This has been a long time coming, and we could not be happier." Student employees at UC-Berkeley and UCLA joined the UAW early last spring. The remaining six campuses voted in June and the results were announced June 20.

The final victory coincided with the AFL-CIO *7 Days in June* campaign, which highlighted the ongoing need to defend the right of workers to choose a voice at work (see page 13).

Graduate students perform about 60 percent of the instruction at UC. The 16-year fight for union recognition culminated in a statewide recognition strike in December 1998, in which thousands of student employees walked out just prior to final exams. In the wake of the strike, state legislators pressured the UC administration to recognize the union. ☐

Washington Child Care Workers Get a Raise

In an effort coordinated by SEIU District 925 and the Economic Opportunity Institute, parents and teachers at union child care centers sent postcards and made calls to Washington State lawmakers in a successful campaign to boost the pay of the state's child care workers, many of whom make little more than the minimum wage. In June, Gov. Gary Locke (D) agreed to allocate \$4 million in welfare reinvestment money to a two-year statewide pilot project that will create a career "wage ladder" based on education, experience and responsibility. And in July, the King County Council approved a pilot project to fund up to \$1 an hour per worker for day care workers' pay.

The program will involve about 100 child care centers across the state, where the average wage is \$6.07 an hour. Initially, the program will lift starting wages to about \$7 an hour.

Child care centers will provide workers with an additional 50 cents per hour for each year of education beyond high school.

The victory is part of a statewide effort by child care workers seeking the freedom to choose a union (see June America@work). @



LEE KANE

Firsthand look: As part of a 7 Days in June Freedom Bus Tour, King County Councilman Dwight Pelz, State Sen. Adam Kline and Councilman Larry Phillips visited the We Are the World day care center to learn more about child care teachers' struggle for a living wage.



Poultry wages: UFCW organizer Dave McIlwaine hands out leaflets to workers at Tyson Foods in Fayetteville, Ark.

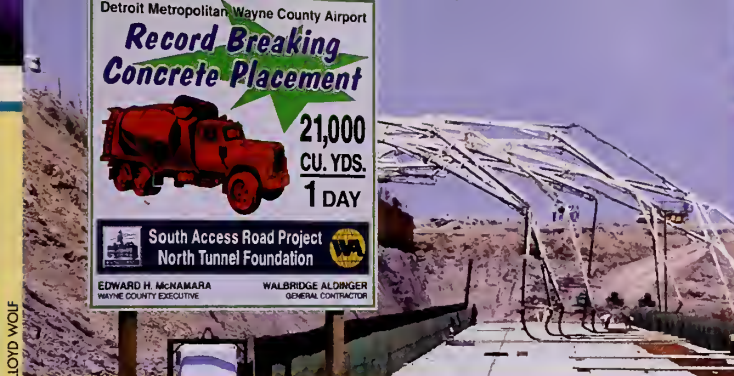
federal court in June.

The suit says the nation's largest poultry producer is illegally making its workers work for free by forcing them to report early and put on required safety equipment off the clock, and stay late off the clock to remove and clean the gear. It also claims workers are denied required break time. Workers are losing up to an hour of pay each day, the suit says.

The UFCW estimates 50,000 hourly workers may be eligible to join the lawsuit. Union attorneys say Tyson could be liable for as much as \$600 million in back wages. About 10,000 Tyson workers are UFCW members. @

POULTRY WORKERS SEEK Overtime Wages

If you earn \$7 or \$8 an hour but your boss didn't pay you for four or five hours of overtime you worked every week, that's a lot of groceries you can't buy and bills you can't pay. Tyson Foods Inc. is doing just that by taking about \$100 million a year in overtime from workers, the Food and Commercial Workers charge in a class-action lawsuit filed in



A Concrete Milestone

Nearly 100 members of Laborers locals 334 and 1076 in Detroit set a new world record for continuous concrete pours in May. Union members worked nonstop for 23 hours pouring and placing 20,917 cubic yards of concrete to form the foundation of a new traffic tunnel at Detroit Metropolitan/Wayne County Airport. Also involved: 7,000 tons of cement, 17,500 tons of stone, more than 600,000 gallons of water, 128 cement trucks and four concrete batch plants. @

SPOTLIGHT

Pillowtex Cannon Workers Stay the Course to Victory

During their 25-year struggle for respect, dignity and a voice at work, some 5,000 workers at Cannon plants in North Carolina never gave up—and their perseverance paid off in June when, in the third election since 1991, workers at the six sheet, towel and home furnishing facilities chose UNITE in the biggest southern textile organizing win in history.

"I knew it eventually would happen, but I didn't think it would happen in my lifetime," Tracy Moody, a Cannon worker, told The Associated Press.

While 285 challenged ballots remain to be determined, workers and union leaders are confident the 2,270 to 2,102 victory will stand.

Narrow defeats in 1991 and 1997 were set aside when the National Labor Relations Board found widespread violations of federal labor law by Cannon management. The NLRB set special election requirements to ensure workers could vote free from intimidation. The result: Without employer interference, workers were able to exercise their freedom to join a union.

"We've got a beacon to show other textile workers that they can do it," says Bruce Raynor, UNITE secretary-treasurer. "It puts a lie to the notion that southern workers are anti-union. It's southern employers that are anti-union."

Union President Jay Mazur calls the win, "A victory for every textile worker in the South, for every UNITE member in America and for all workers who seek dignity and justice at the workplace." @



ROBERT FOX/UNITE

Yes! Workers at Cannon textile plants in North Carolina celebrate their victory.

Working for Working Families

Like unions, community advocates who work on behalf of children, women, immigrants and seniors often struggle to solve unfair and inflexible workplace practices. In June, more than 150 union and community leaders in the Bay area of Northern California began building a common agenda with an action forum sponsored by the Labor Project for Working Families.

Union activists from the California Labor Federation and central labor councils in Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco and San Mateo attended, as did leaders from Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 2, Transit Union Local 192 and SEIU Local 250. Community groups taking part included the California Child Care Resource. The union-community group plans to develop a legislative agenda on work-family issues such as affordable child care and paid family leave, create a legislative alert network and hold issue workshops.

"We want to build an ongoing, long-term network," says Judy Goff, executive secretary-treasurer of the Alameda County Central Labor Council. While a pro-worker legislative majority offers a good opportunity for passage of working family measures, Goff says, "Even in the best of times, you can't stop coming out in force."

For more information, call the LPWF at 510-643-6814 or visit <http://laborproject.berkeley.edu>. @

Bus Drivers Tackle Workplace VIOLENCE

Bus drivers always have faced the daily dangers posed by bad weather and hazardous roads. Increasingly, they are being confronted with workplace violence.

Last November, when a passenger aboard a Seattle bus shot the driver, the vehicle sailed over a bridge guardrail, plunged into an apartment building and injured 30 passengers. In February, a San Diego bus driver was kidnapped and sexually assaulted after completing her route. A passenger boarding a Wisconsin bus last year doused the vehicle with gasoline, burning several passengers.

The Transit Union is pushing hard for legislation to crack down on attacks that endanger

the lives of the drivers and the 6 million passengers who ride public buses every day. The Protect America's Transit Workers and Riding Public Act (H.R. 1080), introduced by Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), would make it a federal offense to intentionally cause death or serious harm to drivers and passengers, intentionally damage vehicles, impair safe operation, make false alarm reports, carry unauthorized firearms or propel objects or destructive substances at mass transit vehicles.

"This legislation would prove an additional layer of protection from the assaults that have become a great concern to transit operators over the last year," ATU President James La Sala says. @

IT'S NOT OVER!

Locked-out Detroit newspaper workers and their supporters sent a message that they're still determined to win justice. "Let's show corporate America that we will not allow workers and their families to be sacrificed on the altar of corporate greed," Teamsters President James P. Hoffa told a rally marking the fourth anniversary of the strike against the *News* and *Free Press*. Some 2,000 workers, represented by six unions, walked out July 13, 1995. They offered to return to work unconditionally in February, 1997. While some of the workers have been rehired, more than 900 remain locked out. @



ANTI-BIAS BILL WOULD Bring Relief

David Horowitz graduated near the top of his law school class from the University of Arizona in 1990. After working for a private law firm and the state attorney general's office, he applied for a job as assistant city attorney in Mesa. He was the city attorney's second choice and was called back six months later when another vacancy occurred.

The city attorney discussed the terms of the job and told Horowitz he was ready to make him an offer. When Horowitz volunteered he was openly gay, the city attorney ended the meeting and told Horowitz he would get back to him. Three weeks later, Horowitz received a letter informing him that someone else had been hired for the job. Horowitz could not sue because there is no redress for sexual orientation discrimination in Arizona.

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), introduced in both houses of Congress June 24, would provide relief for Horowitz and others like him by prohibiting employment discrimination because of sexual orientation.

"Discrimination based on sexual orientation is wrong and un-American," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney says. "We recognize the contributions which gay and lesbian workers have made to our country and our union movement. We steadfastly join in urging Congress to enact ENDA." @

NO PAPER TIGER

Workers at the Blue Ridge Paper Products company who make envelopes and milk cartons now have new job titles: company owners.

In May, members of PACE International Union and the UAW approved an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), giving them 40 percent of the company's common stock. The ESOP "brings hope for the future, job security and control over our own destinies," says Alton Higgins, PACE Local 2-507 member.

When Champion International Co. put its Canton System paper mill and plants up for sale two years ago, workers faced the possibility that the plants would be shut down or sold to a company that wouldn't honor their hard-fought union contracts.

So the workers joined with KPS Special Situations Fund, an investment partnership that often works with unions to turn struggling companies around, to create the new Blue Ridge Paper Products company. They constructed an agreement that will distribute stock and profit sharing to union members, give the union three seats on the company's board of directors, preserve health and pension benefits and ensure union recognition if the company is sold again. The plan covers PACE members at mills and plants in Waynesville and Canton, N.C.; Athens, Ga.; Fort Worth, Texas; Clinton, Iowa; and Olmsted Falls, Ohio. UAW members work at a plant in Morristown, N.J. ☐

BIA Workers Join AFT

For 15 years, workers at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the federal agency that provides services for Native Americans, saw that the more than 1,000 teachers in their department had an effective voice on the job because they were members of the Indian Educators Federation, an AFT affiliate. In June, the secretaries, anthropologists, police officers, accountants, civil engineers and

others decided they, too, wanted a say in solving problems regarding working conditions, favoritism and harassment at the agency. The organizing campaign took place across 20 states and got a boost from staff on loan from nearby AFT locals. The key to success: "A lot of people beating the bushes," says Patrick Baxstrom, president of the Indian Educators Federation. ☐

On Board

Steelworkers President George Becker was appointed last month by President Clinton to serve on the National Skills Standards Board. The NSSB is a partnership of industry, labor, education, civil rights and community groups created to set voluntary skill standards that will enhance the ability of the United States to compete effectively in a global economy. Becker is shown here at a Steelworkers rally at the U.S. Capitol last fall. ☐



OUT FRONT

One-on-one arm-twisting meetings with direct supervisors, intimidation, shut-down threats, forced attendance at union-bashing meetings, firings. Why do working people go through all this to join a union?

That's a good question to reflect on this Labor Day. During *7 Days in June* (see page 13) we heard hundreds of compelling reasons. Here are a few of them, in workers' own words:

- Jill Dibert, a nurse at Mercy General Hospital in Sacramento, Calif.: "What I see is not good. The hospitals are drastically cutting staff and patient care is suffering. I believe that only if my co-workers and I join together and demand better conditions will patient care and our lives be improved."
- Cynthia Rodriguez, a Gigante grocery employee in Orange County, Calif.: "One day I needed to go to the bathroom and they would not give me a break. I had an accident and they gave me an apron to cover it up....We are fighting for dignity and respect on the job."
- Juan Trinidad, an electrician at St. Francis Medical Center/Catholic Healthcare West in Los Angeles, says he wants: "A free and fair vote on the union to...be able to quit my second job and spend more time with my little girl."
- Paige Spaulding, a Delta flight attendant: "This is *not* a battle between adversaries....This is about our right as Americans to organize a voice in our workplace."
- William Haughton, an Airport Sheraton Hotel employee in Philadelphia: "I'm tired of being mistreated at work and I want a union to have better treatment."
- AFSCME member Anthony Martinez in Santa Fe, N.M.: "It's not management but we, the workers, who decide who will be in a union."
- Walterene Shelby, former school food service employee: "I dedicated 25 years of my life to the Denver Public Schools, only to retire with no health benefits and no pension."

• Teresa Cordova, a housekeeper at California's Asilomar State Park and Conference Center: "I have to make miracles happen with my paycheck in order to survive with my daughter. Even though I have worked nine years for Asilomar, I can still qualify for MediCal [California's Medicaid system]."

• Manual Affonso, a San Francisco bike courier: "They treat us like cannon fodder and throw rookies out here without training or help. I love my job and I think a union will just make it better."

• Larry Lee, a truck driver at the Port of Savannah, Ga.: "All I want is my fair share, and a change so others can do better, too."

• Verlynda Ivory, a bus driver who serves the disabled in Milwaukee: "I voted for the union to have a voice at work."

This is just a small sampling of the reasons workers risk so much to join unions—and why today's unions continue our struggle to ensure that every working person has the freedom to choose a voice at work. ☐

LABOR DAY REFLECTIONS



JIM BUYMEN/RIGHTS OWNED BY THE AFL-CIO

BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

Lesson Plan

Boosting children's achievement
in classrooms across the country
means reducing class size,
improving teachers' skills,
rebuilding crumbling schools
and fighting such privatization
schemes as vouchers

BY LAUREN LAZAROVICI



BRUCE GILBERT

TEACHERS AT THE TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL in Miami knew they needed to boost students' reading skills. The children, many impoverished immigrants from Haiti, received little support at home because their parents were unable to read. So, four years ago, working with a reform-minded principal, the teachers voted to undertake the widely respected "Success for All" reading program, which involves intense, one-on-one instruction. Still, they had obstacles to overcome. They had to make sure there was enough time for the new program and English as a Second Language instruction. And they had to increase

the number of well-trained bilingual teachers. Their union, the United Teachers of Dade, an AFT affiliate, made sure the school district implemented those improvements.

Today, the students' test scores are moving up. Gayle Williams, a union leader at Toussaint L'Ouverture school and a first grade teacher, says one of her students, Cassandra, is now in honors third grade after taking part in the "Success for All" program. "She spoke very little English when she got to my classroom," Williams says. "By the end of the year, she was reading everything around the room."



Quality education: For working families, a solid public education is essential to providing opportunities for better jobs at better wages.

Working families have a lot at stake in the success of teachers across the country, such as those at Toussaint L'Ouverture who are working to help their students flourish. It is the children of working families who are educated in public schools, and it is the taxes of working families that make them run. And especially for working families, a solid public education is essential to providing opportunities for better jobs at better wages.

Yet public education increasingly is under attack from some politicians in Congress and state legislatures seeking to rechannel public money to private schools. Those efforts, including creation of a voucher system, in which families receive taxpayer funds to pay for private schools, would reduce support and funding for public schools, leaving behind millions of students. Many voucher proponents are the same right-wing politicians and special interest groups attempting to privatize Social Security and deny workers a say in the political process with paycheck deception schemes.

"This is about a much broader political agenda," says Michael Charney, professional issues director for the AFT affiliate in Cleveland, where a voucher program has been in place for four years. "If there is a private agenda in public education, it can spread to anti-union feelings," he says—ultimately affecting all working families.

Because every union member has a stake in keeping public education strong, "The entire union movement is vehemently opposed to attempts to stigmatize, voucherize or privatize public schools," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney told AFT members at their convention last summer. "We will not permit the pauperization of public education."



Education ABCs: AFT President Sandra Feldman says that if schools across the country were grounded in strong standards, all children, regardless of background, could be exposed to a rigorous academic curriculum throughout their education.

RUSS CURTIS

Vouchers and for-profit schools don't improve skills

Voucher proponents claim they want to improve education, but there is no proof of higher student scores in the two cities where vouchers have been tried. In Milwaukee, for instance, an evaluation of the first five years of the voucher program by professor John Witte of the University of Wisconsin shows no achievement differences between students at "voucher schools" and comparable public school students. Vouchers haven't improved education, but more common sense reforms can: A study by Princeton professor Cecilia Rouse showed that after students participated in a Milwaukee program to reduce class size, they had better reading skills than students in voucher schools and regular public schools.

Vouchers mean taxpayers fund schools that are not accountable to them—often with outrageous results. An independent financial audit in Cleveland, the other city where vouchers have been tried, found that \$1.4 million had been spent for taxicab rides to transport students to voucher schools. And a state audit showed that even though the voucher program was designed for low-income families, well-off children also received taxpayer subsidies.

In both cities, vouchers have siphoned millions of dollars away from public schools and the students they serve. In Cleveland, money for vouchers comes from a special fund earmarked to help disadvantaged students—the very students vouchers are hurting by creating a two-tiered education system.

The public and the courts are starting to give vouchers the dunce cap. Last year, Colorado voters turned down a voucher initiative, and state courts in Maine and Vermont recently rejected voucher proposals.

Contracting-out individual schools or instructional programs is another favorite scheme for supporters of using public funds for private schools. For instance, the Edison Project, a for-profit company that runs schools in nearly a dozen school districts nationwide, is one of several private ventures that claims success in raising student scores and keeping down costs. But many of the for-profit schools have shown mixed and inconclusive achievement gains because of inexperienced teachers, high teacher turnover and large class size. "Edison is obviously confronting the same difficulties in improving student achievement as regular public schools," concludes a 1998 AFT report, *Student Achievement in Edison Schools; Mixed Results in an Ongoing Enterprise*.

Success for all

Teachers and teaching assistants know that the millions of dollars going to vouchers and privatization could be better spent to improve schools for all children. Instead of allowing a privileged few to withdraw from public schools, Cleveland and Milwaukee could have implemented the Success for All intensive reading program—and still had millions of dollars left over, according to "The Emerging Track Record," an AFT analysis. Success for All began in 1986 and

was developed by professor Robert Slavin and other researchers at Baltimore's Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools as a way to ensure success for children in schools serving disadvantaged students.

While most efforts to improve education involve more and better-targeted resources, they also require that educators and working families—parents and students alike—change the way they think about what it means to get a good education. For the past few years, many education leaders have pushed to raise standards at the nation's schools, with unionized teachers at the forefront of this effort. Based on the need for clear education goals, raising standards would require, for example, that all third-graders read fluidly and independently and all ninth-graders master algebra and geometry.

It sounds like a common sense idea, but it's a relatively new notion in U.S. schools. Currently, education varies widely from state to state, district to district and school to school. Some children are exposed to rigorous courses; others are not. Many students get passed from grade to grade regardless of how much they learn, and graduate unprepared for work or further education. This means teachers who try to uphold high standards through tough graduation requirements, extra help for struggling students and challenging homework often are pressured by administrators, parents and students to ease up. Without clear standards, teachers are powerless. AFT thinks that if schools across the country were grounded in strong standards, all children, regardless of background, could be exposed to a rigorous academic curriculum throughout their education.

Improving schools: Reducing class size is one way to ensure all students have a chance to succeed.



KRAIG SCATTARELLA

With its widely respected annual state-by-state report card, *Making Standards Matter*, AFT has reinforced the need to create and enforce education standards. Pressure from such education advocates as AFT has resulted in consistently improved standards over the past few years, translating into a better education for millions of students.

Higher standards: just the start

AFT leaders also work to ensure that the push for higher standards doesn't leave any children behind. "It's not enough to set tougher standards and tell students, 'OK, now meet them, sink or swim,' which is what seems to be happening in some places," says AFT President Sandra Feldman. AFT has lobbied Congress for more funding for summer and after-school programs, but so far the Republican majority has not come through. "If the resources can't be found to bring these youngsters up to speed, the new standards won't help the students who need the help most; they'll make the kids' prospects far worse," Feldman says.

Higher academic standards provide the framework for improving education, but school improvement efforts also must include:

- **Reducing class size:** Research now proves what parents and students know intuitively: Children learn better in smaller classes. A study of elementary school students in Tennessee shows that smaller classes improve student achievement, especially for disadvantaged children. To reduce class size, the nation's school districts will have to hire 2 million new, well-qualified teachers over the next 10 years just to accommodate the huge influx of children. School districts will need to boost teacher salaries if they want to attract qualified applicants to the field. Right now, teachers' starting salaries average \$25,735, compared with more than \$40,000 for college graduates starting engineering and computer science jobs. Last year, union members successfully lobbied Congress to support President Clinton's plan to provide \$1.2 billion to hire 30,000 new teachers.

- **Enforcing sensible discipline:** In 1995, the Texas Federation of Teachers successfully pushed for a state law that mandated "zero tolerance" of violence, drugs and disruption. Since then, the union says violent incidents have dropped by 22 percent. "We don't simply suspend students. They are

placed in in-school suspension, alternative schools or the juvenile justice system," says John Cole, president of the TFT. "Public schools serve the public, and the public demands that schools be safe."

- **Improving teacher quality:** Boosting teacher quality must include peer assistance for new teachers, working with universities to improve teacher training, convincing state lawmakers to toughen teacher licensing standards and exploring innovative ways to recruit new teachers. Through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, instructors who master the content they are teaching and demonstrate superior teaching skills receive the board's certification. "A good teacher has a better chance of producing good students," says Sharon Draper, a board-certified teacher, former National Teacher of the Year and member of the Cincinnati Federation of

Working Together: The Nation's Largest Teachers' Unions

The nation's two largest teachers' unions are working together to improve education at the state and national levels. AFT and the National Education Association held their first joint conference on teacher quality last year, and several state affiliates of the two unions recently decided to unite, combining their power to improve education.

In Minnesota, the AFT and NEA affiliates merged last year to create Education Minnesota. Until then, state legislators had pitted the two unions against each other, using the resulting stalemate as an excuse for not taking action to improve schools.

Since the merger, Education Minnesota has used its combined strength to fight for a statewide health care plan for all education employees, improved teaching skills and peer assistance and review. The Minnesota AFL-CIO added seats on its executive council to accommodate the new members, who say they are looking forward to closer cooperation with advocates for working families. "The rest of the union community can be an ally for us, just as we can be an ally to them," says Judy Schaubach,

Teachers. The CFT bargained for a \$1,000 salary increase and "lead teacher" status for those who pass the board's exams. The union also helps train teachers who want to take the test.

The members and leaders of today's unions are working at every level to ensure that the children of working families get the education they need to succeed as workers and citizens. That means lobbying Congress to rebuild crumbling schools, fighting vouchers in state courts and local school boards and boosting student achievement in classrooms across the country.

Teachers and parents can find helpful information, such as how to get involved with school improvement issues, on the AFT website at www.aft.org. @



Education Minnesota: After the AFT and NEA affiliates merged, Sandra Peterson (left) and Judy Schaubach became co-presidents of the organization.

Education Minnesota co-president.

Several locals have been affiliated with AFT and NEA for many years, benefiting from their combined strength. Los Angeles has had an AFT/NEA union for nearly 30 years. "Prior to 1970, teachers were represented by several associations and were very weak," says Steve Blazak, spokesman for United Teachers-Los Angeles. "The biggest benefit is presenting a united front to the school board. They are not able to divide and conquer."

AFT and NEA merged in Austin, Texas, in June; Montana union leaders are eyeing a merger; and Florida's two teachers' unions are expected to merge officially next May. "Speaking with two voices was not the way to go," says Maureen Dinneen, president of Florida Teaching Professionals, an NEA affiliate—especially when confronting such challenges as a statewide voucher bill Gov. Jeb Bush (R) recently signed. "If we're together, we can respond in a unified manner. It's about having one voice." @

In Dutchess County, N.Y., three overcrowded elementary schools in Arlington are forced to use closets and hallways as classrooms. These schools are not alone. As local school districts struggle to absorb rapidly rising enrollments, many public schools are being forced to set up makeshift classrooms, straining teachers' ability to teach and interfering with students' learning.

Antiquated, overcrowded classrooms and school buildings negatively affect student learning, safety and discipline. According to the U.S. Department of Education, local school districts will need to build 6,000 new schools by 2006 to accommodate rising enrollments and relieve overcrowding. A record number of children are enrolled in elementary and secondary schools—some 52.7 million in 1998, up from 39.4 million in 1984, according to the Education Department—and the number is projected to climb for at least the next 20 years.

Not only are schools overcrowded, many are unsafe. The U.S. General Accounting Office reported in 1995 that more than 15 million public schoolchildren attend classes in buildings with serious heating, ventilation and air conditioning problems; another 7 million learn the three Rs in buildings with safety code violations; and 11 million go to schools with major electrical problems. According to recent studies, students in school buildings in poor condition score significantly lower on achievement tests than students in facilities in good condition.

The average U.S. school is 42 years old, and nearly half of all public school buildings lack the basic wiring needed to give our children access to computers in the class-

room. In 1996, only 14 percent of classrooms had access to the Internet, short-changing students of the critical training they will need to prepare them for the high-tech 21st century.

"Too many children go to schools that are overcrowded and even dangerous, not a good environment for learning," says AFT President Sandra Feldman. "This is an issue that affects every one of us as union members and as parents who want our children to get a good education."

To address overcrowded and dangerous schools, the AFL-CIO, AFT and the Building and Construction Trades have joined together to support H.R. 1660, the Public School Modernization Act. The legislation,

introduced by Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), would provide \$3.2 billion in federal tax credits to help school districts pay the interest on \$24.8 billion in bonds to repair, modernize and build the nation's public school facilities.

Working with its affiliates, central labor councils and state federations, the AFL-CIO is urging union members to contact members of Congress and urge them to support the measure.

H.R. 1660 is one of AFT's highest legislative priorities and would help school districts in every state, but primarily would assist school systems with poor children, Feldman says.

The bill also would support the community by making sure that workers on the projects would be paid prevailing community wages based on the average pay for construction work in the area as required by the Davis-Bacon Act.

"We want children taught in classrooms where the roofs don't leak, the paint doesn't peel and the wiring isn't dangerously antiquated," says BCTD President Robert Georgine. "And we also want to be sure federally funded school modernization projects don't undercut local community wage standards." ☐

—James B. Parks



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Finally, a Chance to Fix Our Schools



7 Days in

Most Americans aren't aware that when workers try to exercise their freedom to join a union, 80 percent of employers force them to attend mandatory, closed-door meetings where bosses and consultants attack the union and attempt to scare employees.

In June, workers at St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center in Toledo, Ohio, seeking a voice at work by joining the UAW, told city council members at a community forum about the medical center's efforts to intimidate them with anti-worker consultants.

Most Americans have no idea that employers fire workers who are active in union campaigns. In fact, workers are fired in 31 percent of union elections.

Fifty union members who were fired last spring when the Salerno Group took over Nortonian Nursing Home in Rochester, N.Y., were joined by more than 500 community supporters in a June rally to bring Nortonian's actions to light.



Nursing home rally: New York State AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes speaks to a crowd of 500 workers and their supporters in Rochester.



Justice at Avondale: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka joins Joseph Lowery, chairman of the National Black Leadership Council, at a public forum with Avondale workers.

Most Americans don't know that 80 percent of employers hire outside consultants to run anti-union campaigns when workers try to join a union.

In New York City, more than 400 people marched with the central labor council and SEIU President Andrew Stern outside a June "union avoidance" seminar put on by Jackson-Lewis, which advises firms fighting workers who seek to choose unions. As workers carried signs and chanted "Hey, hey, ho, ho, union-busters got to go," managers arriving to participate in the union-busting confab tried to avoid the protesters by slipping in through the back doors.

June

By Mike Hall

From June 19–25, tens of thousands of union members, workers seeking to join unions, community activists and pro-worker lawmakers took part in more than 120 rallies, marches, hearings and other events in 38 states to highlight workers' efforts to join together in unions—and show how employers are waging a war on them

Justice bus tour: Locked-out Kaiser Aluminum worker Annette Lindsay tells her story in Houston.





Constructive action: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson rallied with workers in a building trades demonstration in Las Vegas.



A voice at work: UAW Vice President and AFL-CIO Executive Council member Elizabeth Bunn told a crowd of Toledo workers that employees "have a right to decide for themselves, without interference, without retaliation, without coercion, without intimidation, whether they want to be represented by a union."

"It's a war against workers who had no idea—like most of America doesn't—that intimidation and interference by employers is such standard practice in today's workplaces that the freedom to form a union doesn't really exist at all," said AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka. He spoke at a 7 Days in June event in New Orleans, six years to the day after Avondale shipyard workers voted to join a union—a choice that Avondale continues to fight by refusing to recognize the union. (See www.aflcio.org publ/speech for Trumka's speech to the Industrial Relations Research Association that details the war on workers.)

As part of the week of nationwide activities, which built on last year's Making Our Voices Heard Day of Action June 24, union members and their allies joined together in such communities as Rochester, where the Nortonian workers continue to fight for their jobs.

"We will continue to fight for our right to organize—what management did was wrong," fired Nortonian Nursing Home worker Maria Lopez told a cheering crowd.

7 Days

"These workers weren't fired because they were not qualified. These workers weren't fired because their labor wasn't needed," says Bruce Popper, president of SEIU District 1199/Rochester, the union that has represented Nortonian workers since 1997. "They were fired to destroy their voice on the job. They were fired to deny their right to choose. They were fired to bust their union."

Speaking at the Toledo community forum, UAW Vice President Elizabeth Bunn, an AFL-CIO Executive Council member, praised the work of the strong union-community

coalition that successfully lobbied the city council to pass a resolution calling on St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center to respect the workers' right to choose a union. "Toledo is a 'union town,'" Bunn said. "It's just not a phrase that we echo, cheer and chant. It means that workers in this town, wherever they work, whatever job they do, whoever their employer is, they have a right to decide for themselves, without interference, without retaliation, without coercion, without intimidation, whether they want to be represented by a union."

Around the country, workers spoke at town hall meetings, rallies and press conferences, describing how unions have benefited their families and communities. They told about their struggles for a first contract and the ways local, state and federal lawmakers can help even the playing field.

Here are some of their stories.

- "The president of the company told me directly they fired my husband because he was a member of the union," Maribel de Jesus Franco told lawmakers from Baltimore and Washington, D.C., at a 7 Days commu-

June 19

At a public forum with Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-Calif.) and state lawmakers, members of HERE, UFCW and the IBEW in Santa Ana, Calif., spoke out about what happens when they join with co-workers in unions.

June 20

IATSE members, dressed in 1950s outfits, leafleted a performance of "Grease" in Milwaukee, where stagehands who joined the union several months ago still have no contract.

June 21

Food service workers at Bates College seeking to join the IAM rallied in Lewiston, Maine.

June 22

Employees at Overnite Transportation Co. who have chosen to join the Teamsters took part in nationwide rallies all week to protest the freight company's refusal to recognize the union.

June 23

A "Freedom Rider" bus visited Seattle-area worksites with lawmakers and media on board to hear why workers are trying to join unions and how employers block their freedom to do so.

June 24

Carpenters seeking to win their first contract at homebuilder J. C. Bamford and members of AFT, SEIU and other unions continued a week-long series of actions in Georgia.

June 25

More than 100 union members, community and religious leaders, and even some hotel guests joined Philadelphia Airport Sheraton Hotel workers at a lunchtime rally to protest management refusal to respect the right of the workers to join Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 274.

DAVID LEE WAITE

AFL-CIO FILE PHOTO

in June

nity forum. Franco said she and her husband were among 15 workers fired from Up-To-Date Laundry in Baltimore for trying to exercise their freedom to choose a union. "They said if he quit the union, he could return to work. They fired me, honestly, because I am an immigrant worker and because I was a leader of the union." Members of the Metropolitan Baltimore Council of AFL-CIO Unions, the A. Philip Randolph Institute, Gray Panthers, Johns Hopkins University students and local religious groups showed up to support the laundry workers at the forum and during a downtown Baltimore rally.

- Workers in Milwaukee at Laidlaw Transit, which operates county buses to transport the physically challenged, voted to join the Transit Union in the spring, but in an all-too-common stalling tactic, management has challenged the workers' choice through the National Labor Relations Board. Natalie Werstein, who uses a wheelchair and depends on the county buses to get around, told a rally of more than 200 at the county courthouse: "I truly believe that people who get decent wages, benefits and respect through a union contract do a better job and are more likely to stay on the job. I need to know the drivers, know I can trust them and know it's safe."

- Alfredo Silva, who says he was fired for trying to organize a union, asked his supervisor at Precision Concrete in Las Vegas for water on a 100-degree day. Pouring the water on the ground in front of him, the

supervisor told Silva, "There's your water."

Silva, quoted in the *Las Vegas Tribune-Review*, spoke at a town hall meeting sponsored by members of the Carpenters and construction workers fighting for the freedom to choose a union. At another six Las Vegas 7 Days event, AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson joined a rally to present a petition demanding better wages and working conditions at Gypsum Construction sites. Gypsum has refused card-check recognition for workers seeking to join the Plasterers and Cement Masons Local 797.

- Central labor councils in several cities organized bus tours with stops at job sites where workers are trying to exercise their freedom to choose unions or are fighting for first contracts. The Boston "Freedom Ride to Organize" bus took activists to Medford, Mass., to rally for SEIU Local 285 members fighting for first contracts at Courtyard Nursing Home and Whidden Hospital. "We want quality health care for our patients, and for ourselves, but we can't have that without a contract," Whidden health care worker Ethel Sinatra told the crowd.

- Evan Newburn was one of 180 workers at Asilomar State Park and Conference Center in Pacific Grove, Calif., to sign a petition seeking an increase in wages as the workers organized to join the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees. Speaking before a California State Assembly committee that is considering legislation to stop public funds from being used

to fight workers' freedom to choose unions, Newburn described how the park management refused to accept the petition and how the workers' struggle has made her realize the fight is about more than better wages and benefits.

"They want to keep employees

7 Days of Victories

Together with their unions and communities, workers in several states turned 7 Days in June actions into victory rallies.

In Texas, Union Tank Corp. agreed to a first contract with the Steelworkers after it became clear Union Tank workers would take part in a second Justice Bus tour sponsored by the Harris Central Labor Council in Houston. Last year, as part of the June 24 Day to Make Our Voices Heard Justice Bus tour, workers at Union Tank poured out of the plant to greet Justice Bus riders. The workers' actions were "as close to a *Norma Rae* scene as I have ever seen," says Richard Shaw, secretary-treasurer of the central labor council. The pact comes almost a year after the workers chose to join a union.

Workers in New Jersey who had planned a massive picket line and rally at Beachview Care and Rehabilitation Center in Keansburg instead held a victory rally after the owners agreed to recognize their February 1998 choice to join SEIU District 1115. New Jersey AFL-CIO President Charles Wowkanech says unions are sending a message to anti-union employers: "We will do whatever it takes to defend the rights of workers to organize a union."

In California and Las Vegas, where workers had planned eight events to protest actions by Willis Roofing, a subcontractor for giant housing builder Kaufman and Broad, they instead celebrated a contract settlement. A nationwide union campaign fighting for the 250 workers' freedom to choose a union resulted in Willis recognizing their choice to join the United Union of Roofers and Waterproofers and providing \$400,000 in back pay. ©



Fighting back: Workers continue to fight for union recognition at Avondale shipyard, which has waged an anti-worker campaign since 1993.

where they're at, at a lower level, where they don't feel empowered to stand up for themselves," Newburn told the committee. "I also want the union just for respect. I want a voice on the job."

7 Days in June was a tremendous step in letting the public know about the war employers wage against workers. If you want to plan an event to spotlight workers' efforts to join unions in your area, call Liann Ainsworth at 202-639-6225 or Enid Eckstein at 617-557-5488 for information. ©



Dress rehearsal: Kids portraying Marvin the big fish and a school of little fish get to put on a play.

But one brave fish, Al, knew how to defeat the monster Marvin: Bring all the smaller fish together to stand up to Marvin and drive him out of the lake.

In other words, organize.

Now this may sound like a fish story, and it is: *The Really Big Fish Story*, written, produced and performed by the Solidarity Kids Theater in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minn. Solidarity Kids is sponsored by the Postal Workers and the University of Minnesota Labor Education Service, which provides artistic direction.

GREG POFERL

Greg Poferyl, an APWU national business agent and theater producer, says since the theater was founded in 1993, more than 300 kids from grade school through high school have taken part in the productions spotlighting child labor, corporate greed, privatization and solidarity. The idea for a kids' theater came from the Meeting the Challenge Committee, a diverse group of Twin Cities trade unionists who work together to promote the principles and traditions of the American union movement.

"We want to give the kids and their families an enjoyable learning experience about the labor movement and, at the same time,

A HARD ACT TO FOLLOW

BY MIKE HALL

Marvin was one evil fish with a bad attitude. The 30-foot-long blue monster with razor teeth made the mean pikes in Minnesota's 10,000 lakes look like guppies. Marvin was wreaking havoc on the lake community. Big, blue Marvin picked off the smaller fish one by one as they swam by themselves. First he attacked and ate all the fish of a different color, then the fish that were a different gender, all the disabled fish and even a postal worker fish.



GREG POFERL

Rising star: The "Union Bug" is a visitor at every perform

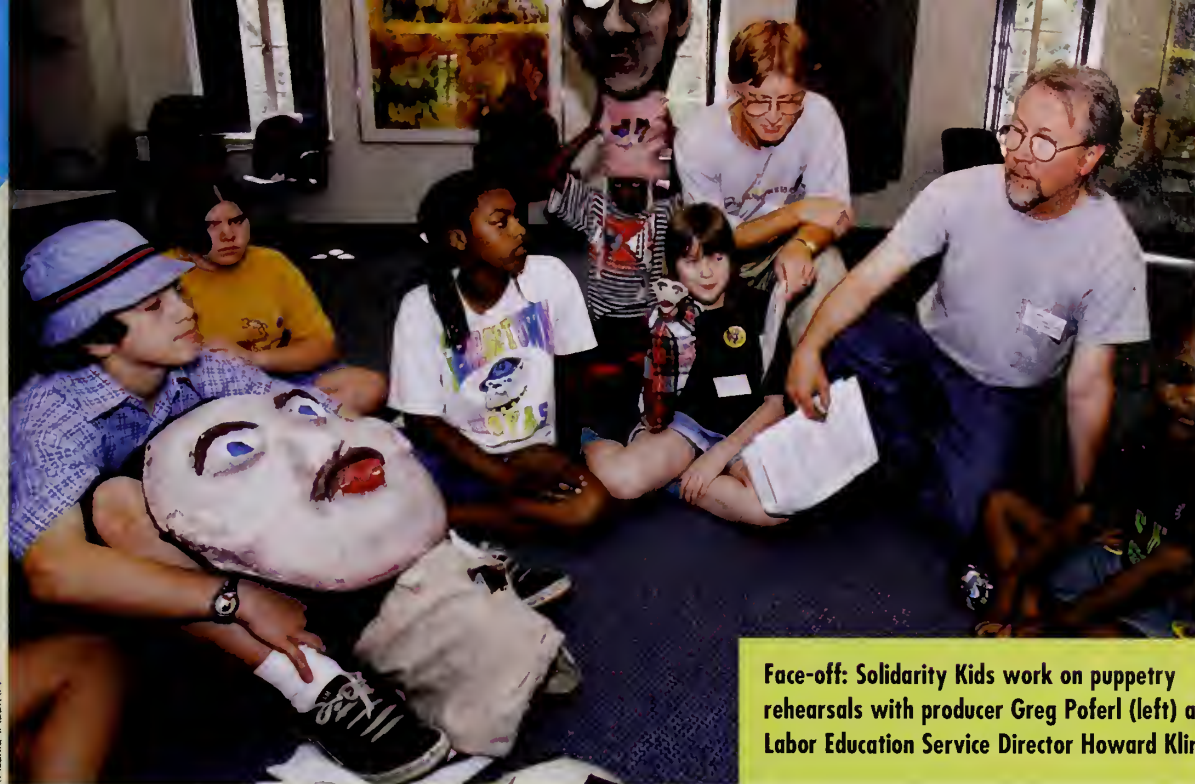
let them develop their theater skills—acting, dance, singing, poetry, staging and art.”

Most of the child performers are recruited by word of mouth from friends, teachers and relatives. Volunteers from the local theater community, unions and activist groups pitch in to help and train the kids in stage and prop design, theater arts and the other behind-the-scenes crafts that must be mastered before the curtain goes up.

Solidarity Kids appears on the television program “Minnesota at Work,” produced by the university’s Labor Education Service, and takes its show on the road, performing at the annual Meeting the Challenge Labor Conferences in St. Paul and at the Great Labor Arts Exchange at the AFL-CIO’s George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Maryland. Last month, the group held a theater workshop at a labor forum in Manhattan, Kan., and gave a well-received performance for the area’s living-wage coalition. Wherever the group appears, it is accompanied by a child performer dressed as a cheery, round insect—the Union Bug.

The Solidarity Kids Theater is a good community outreach tool, Poferl says. “The children have gotten their families, friends, schools and religious communities involved in issues surrounding child labor and worker exploitation.” Members of the Solidarity Kids also have won local, state and national honors for projects on labor issues.

One of the troupe’s most successful plays is the *Spirit of Iqbal*, written and directed by Howard Kling, director of the Labor Education Service. A true story, the play depicts the life of Iqbal Masih, a bonded child worker in Pakistan’s carpet industry who referred to his boss as his “owner.” Before he was 10 years old, Iqbal became active in the Bonded Labor Liberation Movement and helped convince other Pakistani children to stand up against their exploitation. He was shot and killed while riding his bicycle in 1995.



VALERIE TABBITA

Face-off: Solidarity Kids work on puppetry rehearsals with producer Greg Poferl (left) and Labor Education Service Director Howard Kling

No one was arrested, and activists suspect he was murdered because of his activism.

“He inspired other people to do things, and those people doing things inspired even more people. It’s a chain reaction,” says 14-year-old Savannah Rhamberg-Reich, who played Iqbal.

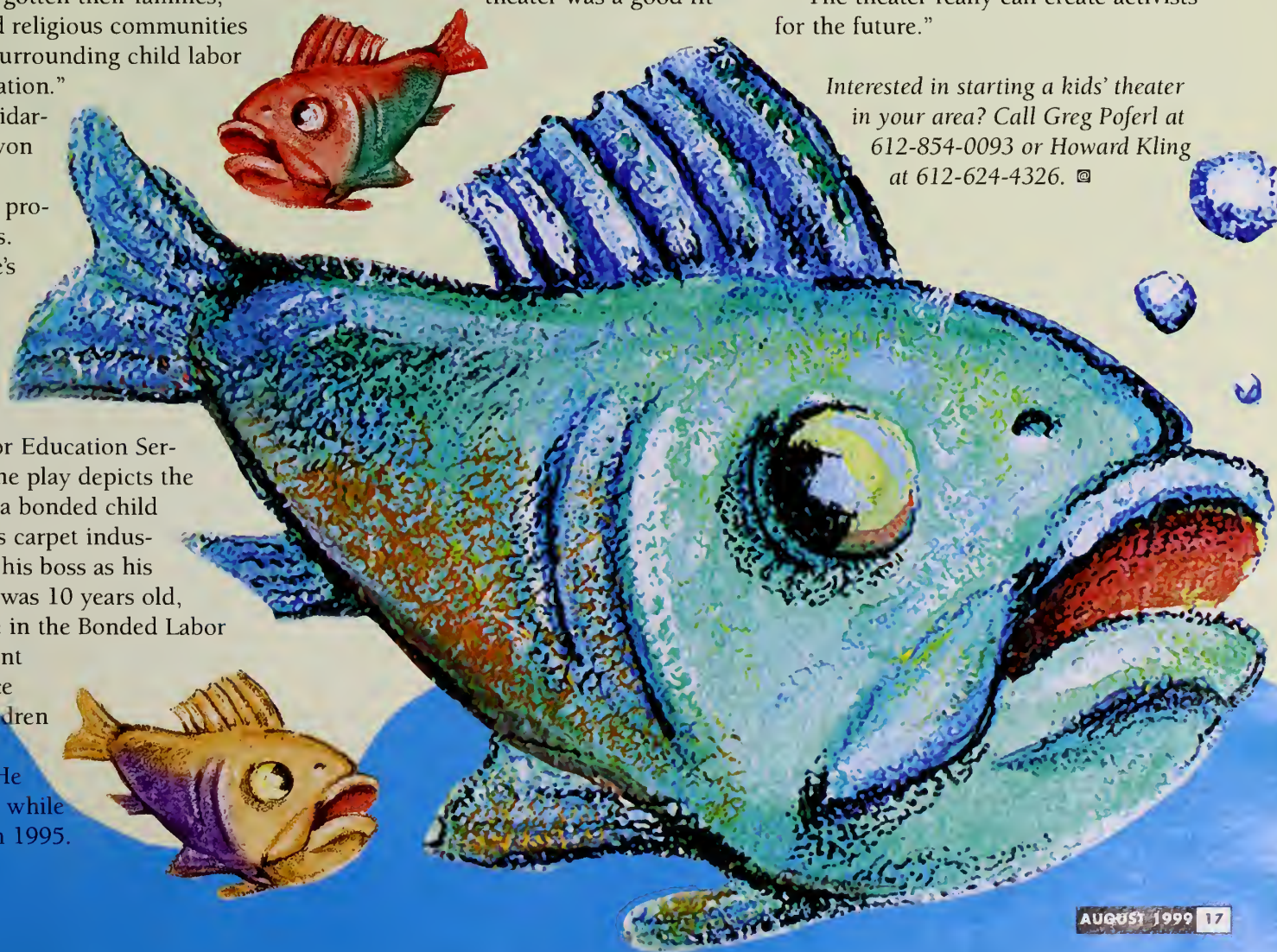
Her mother, Lois Rhamberg, says the theater was a good fit

for her daughter’s interests.

“Child labor had just come into public focus, and for a kid, this gives them the idea that you can be helpful and that things can change,” she says. “I think that over time, all the kids become more aware of other labor issues, too. As a family, we talk about it a lot more.

“The theater really can create activists for the future.”

Interested in starting a kids’ theater in your area? Call Greg Poferl at 612-854-0093 or Howard Kling at 612-624-4326. ☐



TALKING UNION

BY DAVID KAMERAS

You already know that unions improve the lives of workers and their families. But do your children know too?

Talking union to kids is good both for the union movement and the family. It lays the groundwork for creating the next generation of activists and others supportive of working family priorities. It also generates common family values and experiences that bond family members together.

"The union helps our family have a happy life," says Max Mendelson, 5, whose father, Drew, is a senior communications specialist with California State Employees Association/SEIU Local 1000.

"People's work lives are not something separate from their home lives," says Amanda Vesey, a council representative with AFSCME Council 18 in Albuquerque, N.M. "When members integrate their families into actions that we have, it teaches children that this is about working families."

Recent data collected by the University of Minnesota's Labor Education Service suggest children who are aware of their parents' activism are far more likely to feel positive about unions. "They benefit from the knowledge they pick up concerning what a union means," says Howard Kling, labor educator and director of telecommunications at the education service. "I think they'll carry it for the rest of their lives."

Educators say that the best way to talk to kids about unions is by relating to concrete experiences they are having now.

"You have to touch them where they can feel it," says Maurice "Skip" Turner, program associate and conference coordinator

with the University of Michigan's Labor Studies Center. He says talking to kids about the sweatshop-made Nikes their friends wear, for example, hits home. Each year, Turner puts together four conferences for adult union activists that also feature youths and union workshops aimed at participants' kids ages 8-12 and 13-18.

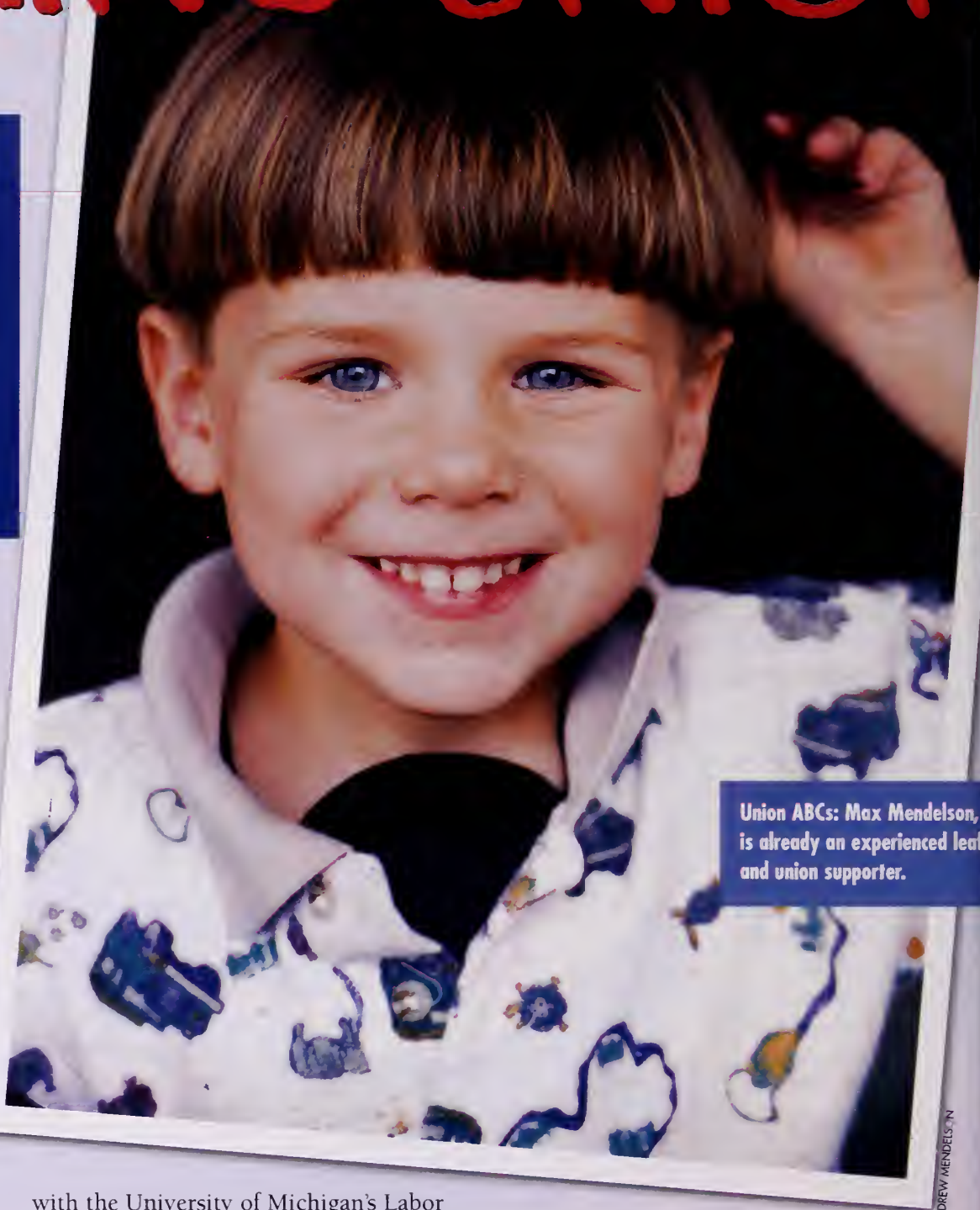
Can you relate?

"Certainly notions of stability, working together and justice are concepts kids can relate to," adds Kling. "It's important they know adults are working for the same things, just on a different level." But Kling

cautions against lecturing. "I think kids react to too much preachiness," he says.

Here are some ways to interest children in union values.

- Ask them, "What's your job?" (Typical answers include "to go to school" and "to do what my teacher tells me to do.") "If you do good work, you're supposed to get good grades. But if you did 'A' work and got all 'F's, would that be fair? What could you do about it?" Make the point that working adults form unions because unions work to make sure their members, and all workers, are treated fairly.



Union ABCs: Max Mendelson, is already an experienced leaf and union supporter.

DREW MENDELSON

TO YOUR KIDS

- Tell your kids that many years ago, many Americans didn't go to school when they were children because they had to work. In some countries, children still have to work. Ask your children what working instead of going to school would mean to their lives today and to their future. Tell them our unions helped change the law to prohibit child labor.

- Remind them that when they get sick, you take them to the doctor. Explain how your union negotiates with your employer for such benefits as health insurance. Say that some kids whose parents don't have a union can't get the health care they need.

Never too early to join a picket line

By exposing children to union ideas and activities, you can help shape attitudes and behavior that get carried into adulthood. Many of today's workers say such childhood events still strongly influence who they are today.

That's true for Maggie Macon, a cable customer service representative in Norton Shores, Mich. When Macon was growing up in Cleveland, she proudly wore her father's Electrical Workers Local 38 hat and jacket as she accompanied him to Labor Day parades. She recalls times when fellow union members helped pay the bills when her dad was injured or very ill. Those memories later evolved into an enduring sense

of solidarity with all unionists. "Now when I pass a picket line, even hundreds of miles away from home, my heart is with these people, and when possible, I will still stop with doughnuts, coffee or pop," she says.

Childhood exposure to union values also benefited Jeff Hughes, a Traverse City, Mich., Sara Lee worker and business agent for Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 81, who went to union meetings as far back as he can remember.

"There wasn't a day that went by that my father didn't remind the family that his good union wages were what put food on the table," he says. "My kids will be indoctrinated."

The example you set through your union activism may influence your children's life choices—including their occupation. Deanna Busalacchi, communications director at the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO, remembers attending actions, running around the

union hall and hiding under the podium as a kid—while listening to what was going on and absorbing the union message. Her father, Frank, now secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 200 in Milwaukee, "started out driving a truck. But he worked hard, and the union

acknowledged that and promoted him." Busalacchi says union activism has created "a wonderful life for me and my dad. I would want my kids to know it could happen to them, too."

Eagerness to know, through their parents' eyes, what the world is all about makes children receptive to union values. "Very often at rallies or any kind of action, people bring their

kids," says AFSCME's Vesey. "I think the kids learn a lot."

Is it ever too early to start educating your child about unions? Max Mendelson has joined his father to picket and hand out leaflets since he was a baby. One day at his Sacramento preschool, he announced that he had been leafleting recently with his dad. When his teacher asked him why, he answered, "For the union!"

"He is a more practiced leafleter than many adult unionists I know, and is very proud of his union knowledge," says his dad.

Parents know that preparing kids for adulthood is important. Talking union can help. Vesey thinks it is vitally important to educate the next generation "so they'll have an understanding of what it means to have respect and dignity at work and to hold employers accountable."

Share your ideas for talking to kids about unions. E-mail or write to: David Kameron, dkameron@aflcio.org, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. ☐



Hands on: Jeff Hughes and daughters Nikohl and Jeydon assemble a food basket for an ailing union member.

Resource Book Bag

Here are some tools to help you talk union with your kids:

- Child labor and sweatshops are compelling issues for kids, and a UNITE website features a number of activities for both elementary and secondary school students (www.uniteunion.org/sweatshops/sweatshop.html). "Stop Sweatshops" book covers also are available from UNITE. To order, call Ginny Coughlin at 212-265-7000, ext. 821.

- *Getting It Together*, a video that uses a rap song and game show to teach kids in grades 5–12 about unions, is available with a study guide and a *Labor Studies Curriculum for Teachers*. The teachers' curriculum is a 16-unit collection of lesson plans and supporting material developed with the assistance of Twin Cities-area union organizations to help integrate the contributions of the American union movement into primary and secondary classroom instruction. \$50 for one copy, \$40 for two or more copies, from the University of Minnesota Labor Education Service. Call 612-624-5020.

- *The Yummy Pizza Company*, a booklet/kit for introducing elementary school kids to the work world, is available for \$3 from the California Federation of Teachers/AFT at 510-832-8812.

- The International Labor Organization's website (www.us.ilo.org/ilokids) helps children of all ages get involved in the fight against child labor. ☐

HEART OF THE MOVEMENT

DANGER

Educated Union Member

Erin Bowie, 20, is a shop steward at Southern New England Telecommunications Corp., in Hartford, Conn., where she has worked as a customer service representative for the past two years. A member of the Connecticut Union of Telephone Workers, a Communications Workers affiliate, Bowie has taken part in CWA's organizing campaign among American Airlines customer service employees. In July, she attended the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute's three-day training program.

I've been working on the American Airlines campaign in Hartford, phone-banking and going to customer service centers, leafleting and talking to people. Where I've made the most difference is where people don't know about unions.

"When I tell people that I can go from earning \$9 an hour to \$20 an hour within four years and that I have free health benefits, they are impressed. At American, it can take more than 15 years to get to the top of the pay scale. They feel intimidated, and because there is no contract, things are arbitrary. Supervisors have all the power. At my job, supervisors have to listen to me because I'm the union.

"As young people in the workforce, we tend to accept low wages and bad benefits if we don't know it can be better. We are just glad to have a

job that pays more than minimum wage. I don't think that when you are in high school you realize what it is like in the working world. Working conditions are getting worse and worse. I see people who work at places where they have no benefits, and it's upsetting. It is important that people have the same opportunities I do, such as pay and a 401(k) plan the company matches. I want everyone to have a voice in the workplace.

"When I started with the phone company, the word 'union' was not in my vocabulary. I learned more about it when we went on a 30-day strike about a year ago. I'd never done anything like that before. It made me see the company in a different light. I realized we, the employees, had to look out for ourselves. I saw the tactics the company was

using, such as paying replacement workers high wages to do our jobs. I thought to myself, 'You can afford to do that, but you can't bargain with us?' I started going to all the rallies and all the union meetings.

"Now I'm a steward. I spend all of my lunchtimes and all of my breaks doing union stuff, and I answer questions about the contract and benefits.

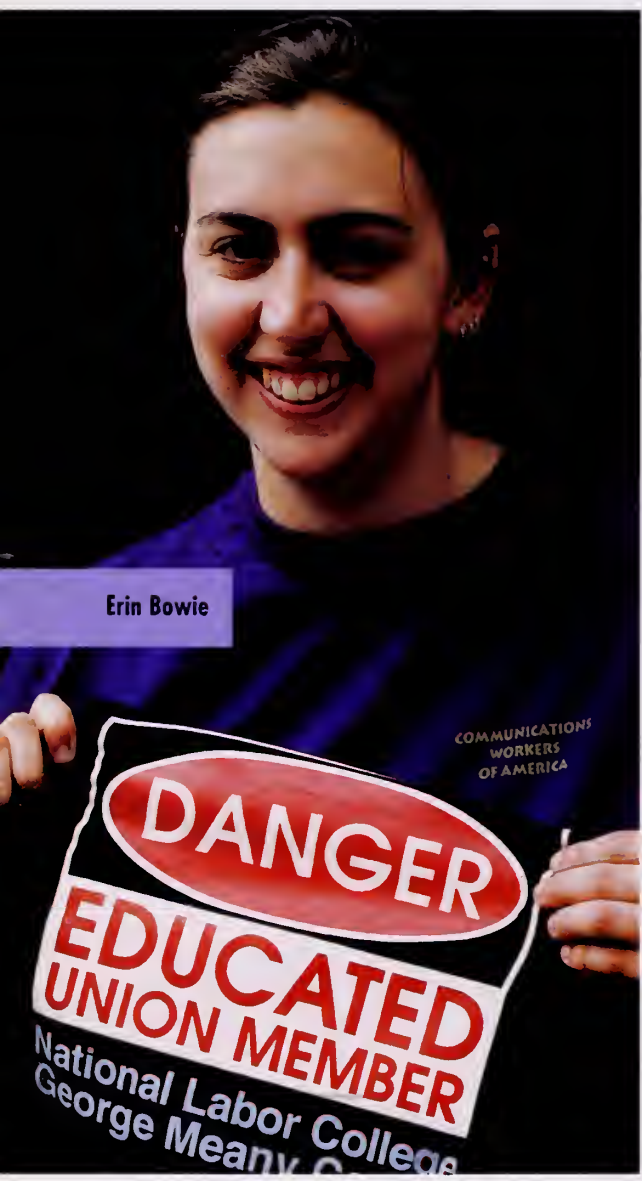
"Going to the Organizing Institute was a really powerful experience. I was with 40 people who want to make a difference, from college students to 20-year Teamsters.

As young people in the workforce, we tend to accept low wages and bad benefits if we don't know it can be better. I don't think that when you are in high school you realize what it is like in the working world.

It was empowering and inspiring. I really felt like we all had a common bond.

"I realized that I need to help people take more responsibility for their union. I'm going to use the techniques I learned to organize from within. We are going to develop people we think are leaders and encourage them to take an active part. With my union, I know I'm doing something important that will benefit society.

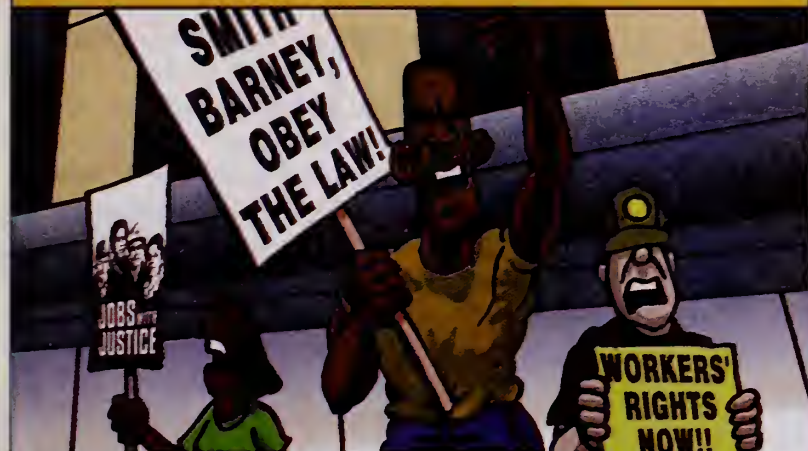
"While at the George Meany Center, I bought this T-shirt that says, 'Danger: Educated Union Member.' I know management is going to classes and learning tactics on how to break the union. I want to show them that I'm proud and I'm intelligent. It is also directed at my co-workers. It is really important we show pride in our union." @



Erin Bowie

EARL DOTTER

SOMETIMES THE WINNER OF A FIGHT IS WHOEVER IS LEFT STANDING AT THE END.



Rocky vs. Smith Barney

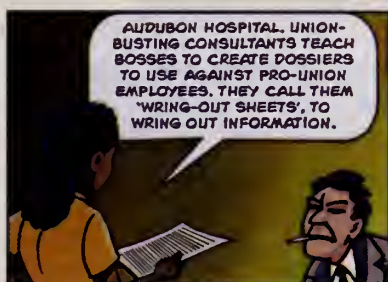
Seeking a voice in the workplace is no laughing matter. But sometimes humor helps get out the organizing message.

Jobs with Justice recently released the second in its series of *Jobs with Justice Comics*, a light-hearted educational organizing tool that counters the aggressive anti-union campaigns many workers face when they seek the freedom to choose a voice on the job.

"The Big Fix" follows Rocky Gonzalez, a former—downsized—middleweight fighter, and the challenges he encounters as a cafeteria worker trying to organize a union at the stock trading firm Salomon Smith Barney. Along the way to victory, Rocky is fired for organizing and learns a few lessons about the struggles of workers to win union recognition from their employers at Avondale shipyard and Overnite Transportation.

The four-page, full-color tabloid, drawn by Mike Konopacki and written by Konopacki and Alec Dubro, is available on the Jobs with Jus-

tice website at www.jwj.org or by calling Simon Greer at 202-434-1106. ☐



The Union Calling Card

"I am a union worker...I spend union wages."

For years, union members have printed variations of this message on business cards and checks to let proprietors know the money spent in their establishment was "earned by a union member" able to afford the purchase through the efforts of his or her union. Despite the spread of the Internet and other high-tech communication, this one-on-one approach continues to grow.

Robert Palmer, Fire Fighters' 2nd District vice president, has handed out the cards for more than a decade—making them available to members, leaving them at restaurants and enclosing them with his monthly payments. "Letting people know what a union contract can do, that's what it's all about," says Palmer.

Marvin Wilson, a Graphic Communications member and retired IAFF member, uses his union print shop in Matthews, N.C., to print and distribute thousands of the cards locally for free, most recently to support Steelworkers Local 850 members who have been on strike against Continental General Tire in Charlotte, N.C., since Sept. 20, 1998.

"I think it is important that merchants near the plant know how much of their business comes from union-earned dollars," he says.

For information on how you can create your own union calling card, contact Marvin Wilson at 704-882-9491. ☐

YOU NEED UNIONS TOO
The money I have just left in your establishment was earned by a Union member. I have been able to afford this purchase and to give you my patronage through the efforts of my Union which has negotiated fair wages and working conditions for me and my fellow workers. Many other Union members are also your customers. If we're doing OK, you're doing OK.
Think about it!

UNIONS—SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY



SECOND DISTRICT IAFF
Missouri • Kansas • Iowa • Nebraska

Lights, Camera—Inaction

More than a dozen reporters employed by Dow Jones & Co. Inc. refused to appear on the cable news programs on CNBC unless permitted to wear buttons that say, "I ♥ My Retirement BENEFITS." The members of the Independent Association of Publishing Employees/Communications Workers were protesting Dow Jones' proposal to slash pension contribu-

tions—despite first quarter net income earnings of \$51.5 million, up from \$34.7 million a year earlier.

"Cutting the retirement plan is an issue that upset all the reporters quite a lot," says *The Wall Street Journal* science reporter

Robert Langreth, whose refusal to remove his button launched the campaign in June. Langreth says management's

strong, negative reaction to workers wearing the buttons in the newsroom helped trigger the movement, which was bolstered by "No button, no show" messages posted on the company's bulletin boards.

Dow Jones reporters' appearances on CNBC are considered voluntary if performed during off hours—but management called the workers' protest a slowdown and warned of legal repercussions, a statement CNBC later withdrew. ☐



My Retirement BENEFITS

Tapping into \$4 Million a Year in Union Scholarships

Maria Kaduck was a 17-year-old high school senior in 1979 when, as the daughter of a Seafarers member, she won a four-year scholarship from the Seafarers Welfare Plan Scholarship Program.

Today, the 36-year-old Kaduck-Perez is an attorney for the National Labor Relations Board in Miami. She is also one of the tens of thousands of union members and their children who have had the opportunity to pursue an education through union-sponsored scholarships.

The burden of soaring college costs can threaten working families' ability to afford higher education. In the 1997-1998 school year, tuition and fees averaged \$13,664 at private, four-year institutions and \$3,111 at public institutions.

At a time when many students and their families are forced to turn to loans that can saddle a graduate with years of debt, America's unions are helping to ease the financial burden of higher education. Each year,



unions award more than \$4 million in scholarships, ranging from \$200 for textbooks to four-year, \$20,000 awards.

The SIU scholarship program, established in 1953 for union members and their

dependents, is one of more than 40 offered by national and international AFL-CIO affiliated unions. In addition, there are 16 state federation and almost 50 central labor council scholarship programs, including more than \$367,000 in financial aid made available by the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, dozens of central labor councils and more than 120 local unions in the state.

Hundreds of local, regional and district unions also provide financial aid for higher education. In Hawaii, for example, dependents of Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 142 members in Honolulu can win tuition and fees to the University of Hawaii at Manoa or Hilo.

When researching scholarships, another source of student financial aid union members should consider is the U.S. Department of Education. For more information, contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 800-433-3243 or visit the website, www.FAFSA.ed.gov. ☐

Q&A

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR FRONT-LINE ACTIVISTS

Q. Our local union would like to buy tapes or CDs of union-oriented music (*Solidarity Forever*, etc.) that can be played at meetings or even played on our phone system for callers on hold. Is there a good source for these recordings?

A. Try the Labor Heritage Foundation at 1925 K St., N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20006, phone: 202-842-7810; Collector Records, 301-589-1663; or Smithsonian Folkways, 955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 7300, MRC953, Washington, D.C. 20560, phone: 800-

410-9815, website: www.si.edu/folkways/start.html. Also, see page 23.

Q. An employer signed an agreement to recognize our union after a majority of the unit employees signed cards supporting union representation. Now the employer is refusing to honor the agreement and won't look at the cards. Is there any way to enforce the agreement?

A. When the employer refuses to check the cards according to the agreement, the union can enforce the agreement in federal court under Section 301 of the Labor Management Relations Act, which gives federal courts jurisdiction over lawsuits for violations of contracts between an employer and a union. The courts also should enforce the bargaining obligation where the employer checked the cards and refused to acknowledge the majority

showing, although some employers may argue that only the NLRB has authority to decide whether the union is the bargaining representative.

The union has recourse at the NLRB, which has established that it is an unfair labor practice for an employer to refuse recognition after the employer corroborates a union's majority status through an agreed-upon procedure, such as card-check.

However, the NLRB will not bar an unorganized employer from renegeing on a card-check agreement or other procedures if the employer does so prior to actually verifying the union's majority status.

What's your question?

Send a letter, fax or e-mail to: **America@work**, AFL-CIO, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; Phone: 202-637-5010; Fax: 202-508-6908. E-mail: atwork@afcio.org. ☐

PUBLICATIONS

Ravenswood: The Steelworkers' Victory and the Revival of American Labor, by Tom Juravich and Kate Bronfenbrenner, is a detailed chronicle of the battle between members of Steelworkers

Local 5668 and management at the Ravenswood Aluminum Co. plant in Ravenswood, W. Va. From Oct. 31, 1990, to April 29, 1992, some 1,700 U.S. Steel members were locked out by Ravenswood. Throughout the ordeal, Local 5668 members maintained their solidarity—after 18 months, only 17 of the 1,700 workers had

crossed the picket line.

The authors show how the Steelworkers, with the support of the union movement, waged a complex and sophisticated campaign that demonstrated how union members can win against even the largest of corporate giants. The authors weave an hour-by-hour record of events on the picket line, at the bargaining table and at the National Labor Relations Board. But the account goes well beyond standard reporting to reveal the reasons behind the victory of unified union members over one of the nation's largest aluminum companies.

Juravich is director and associate professor at the Labor Relations and Research Center, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and Bronfenbrenner is director of labor education research for the New York State School of Industrial Relations at Cornell University. Cornell University Press. \$29.95 in hardback. To order, visit www.cornellpress.cornell.edu or call 800-666-2211.

Uprooting Injustice: A Report on Working Conditions for North Carolina Farmworkers and the Farm Labor Organizing Committee's Mt. Olive Initiative is a 32-page bilingual report that discusses the long hours, low pay, substandard housing and dangerous health conditions farm workers



EXHIBIT

Not a Fair Trade for All

NAFTA (*Not A Fair Trade for All*) at the George Meany Memorial Archives in Silver Spring, Md., includes one dozen photo and text documentary pieces detailing the struggle of workers in the maquiladoras of northern Baja, Mexico, and the U.S. union movement's attempts to support them. The exhibit is by artist Fred Lonidier, a professor in the Visual Arts Department at the University of California at San Diego and a member of University Council/AFT Local 2034. He has been a union activist for more than 25 years and, since 1989, has been cablecasting Labor Link TV on four stations in San Diego. The exhibit runs through Oct. 8. ☐

face in the fields. Sponsored by the Institute for Southern Studies, the booklet includes stories from farm workers and details about FLOC's historic organizing campaign.

Copies are \$6 each; 11–50 copies, \$5 each and 51–100 copies, \$4 each; includes shipping. Call the Farmworker Justice Project at 919-419-8311, ext. 25; e-mail: erica@i4south.org; fax: 919-419-8315; or mail checks payable to Institute for Southern Studies, P.O. Box 531, Durham, N.C. 27702. ☐

CONFERENCE

"Best Practices in Ergonomics," a one-day conference on ergonomics problems and solutions, is set for Sept. 9 at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Silver Spring, Md. Workshops will focus on hazard analysis, prevention and control; ergonomics programs developed with worker input; medical management; and training and education.

The event is sponsored by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the National Resource Center for OSHA Training, a consortium that includes the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department, and the Meany Center. Registration is \$75. For more information, call Brenda Cantrell at 301-431-5435. To register, call Karen Banks at 301-431-5422. ☐

MUSIC

Union Power, the latest CD by The Whiteville Choir, is a blend of union and gospel songs by two dozen members of UNITE

Local 1077 in Whiteville, N.C. The machinists, stitchers, pressers and others who work at a men's suit factory in Whiteville began singing together in 1994. UNITE produced the group's first CD, *Together*, in 1996. *Union Power* features union standards such as "Solidarity Forever" and original songs such as "Angel of Freedom," written by UNITE Special Projects Coordinator Phil Cohen, who also produced the CD. To purchase the CD on the Internet, visit Hard Miles Music at www.inetalab.unc.edu/hardmile or send \$15 to UNITE Choir Project, 1010 Tucker St., Greensboro, N.C. 27405. ☐



TELEVISION

Livelihood, the television series about working people, premieres a new season on PBS Aug. 20. Host and humorist Will Durst journeys cross-country into the everyday lives of bricklayers, teachers, fire fighters, librarians and beer vendors. The first four of the hour-long shows will air on successive Friday evenings from Aug. 20 to Sept. 17, with the final show on Oct. 15. Check local listings for broadcast times. The series is a production of The Working Group, producers of the *We Do The Work* series, also shown on PBS. For a wealth of resources and links, look up the *Livelihood* website at www.pbs.org/livelihood. ☐



RON CHAPMAN

Good Jobs, Strong Communities A Voice for Working Families

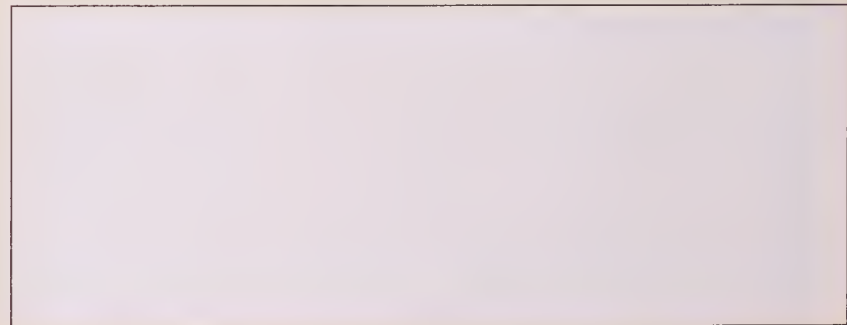
On Saturday, Oct. 9, an unprecedented Working Families Convocation will bring convention delegates together with union, religious, political and community leaders to celebrate the resurgence of working families and reaffirm the union movement's commitment to economic and social justice—on the job, in our communities, in our nation and across the globe. All delegates are urged to join President Clinton, California Gov. Gray Davis, the Rev. Jesse Jackson and others at the Working Families Convocation and the Working Families Picnic that follows.

As the convention opens, delegates will have the opportunity to:

Oct. 11: Join newly organized workers while discussing building good jobs and strong communities, fair trade, workers' rights and the challenges of a global economy.

Oct. 12: Welcome striking workers, address the challenges of changing to meet the new economy and wage an afternoon Street Heat action.

Oct. 13: Recognize political activists and *2000 in 2000* candidates and share plans to create a strong political voice for working families in 2000.



Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Members and Activists

SEPTEMBER 1999

America @work

Virtual Organizing

ALSO INSIDE: • Remembering Lane Kirkland • Unsafe Trucks • Older Voters

IDEAS AND VIEWS FROM YOU

"I WITNESSED ANOTHER HONOR paid Mr. Kirkland two years ago, an unheralded and spontaneous one that said much in a revealing and memorable way. Shortly after retiring from almost 16 years as president of the AFL-CIO, Mr. Kirkland began to write his memoirs from an office [at the] George Meany Center for Labor Studies. On occasion, he would lunch in the campus cafeteria, commonly by himself and most often absorbed in some reading material....In 1997, seated one July day in the cafeteria among more than 100 grassroots unionists from all over America, I heard people whispering, 'Kirkland's here. Kirkland's here.' Someone had spotted him seated at the cafeteria's rear. Heads began to turn, and then, one after another, every man and woman rose...and began to applaud. My eyes filled with tears as the old man looked up surprised from his reading, broke into a soft, almost embarrassed smile, and waved a salute to his anonymous troops."—Arthur B. Shostak, labor educator, Meany Center; professor of sociology, Drexel University, Philadelphia

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in **America@work**.

"THAT WAS A GREAT ARTICLE on Harley-Davidson ['Manufacturing: Why it Matters'] in the July issue. I just think it brings home the fact that owners should not be scared of their workers. The place we organized is a subcontractor of Harley-Davidson. How is it that a company doing business with Harley-Davidson can't see it in the same way? Corporate America needs to understand that the workers and management can work together. I'm going to use the article as a flier."—Frank Jerez, organizer, UNITE Local 4, Cleveland

Say What?

How has your union used e-mail, the Internet or other computer-driven technology to organize workers?



Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue.

America@work

815 16th St., N.W.

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Here's What You Say

ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION HAS BARGAINED FOR EQUAL PAY AND PAY EQUITY:

"I think the CWA has done very well in the BellSouth bargaining units by way of equal pay-equal work. It's pretty much always been that way in my 22 years, although we could always use a really good wage increase, since the CEOs are the only ones getting the big bucks. We are equal internally here in Florida, anyway, after you climb the wage scales and top out."—Michele Nemo, president, Palm Beach-Treasure Coast, AFL-CIO, West Palm Beach, Fla.

unions@work

and our

members@work

and collective power

in our

communities@work,

that's when you see

America@work

"WELL, WONDER OF WONDERS:

Congress gave the rich their big tax cut and turned its back on Medicare and Social Security. Your July article on Medicare lays out the case why whatever budget surplus there is should be spent on strengthening Medicare, helping older Americans with prescription drugs and bolstering Social Security, not on cutting capital gains taxes for the fat cats or slashing estate taxes for millionaires' children. Let's hope President Clinton vetoes this shortsighted tax gift to the rich."—Robert Cawley, PACE International Union Local 840, Upper Montclair, N.J.

"I NOTED

[the article in] your recent issue (July 1999) about post-secondary educational opportunities at the George Meany Center. However, I was confused to see another program initiated by the Meany Center not mentioned. The University of Massachusetts at Amherst offers a distant-learner graduate degree in 'union leadership and administration'....It's an opportunity to spend 20 days on campus each year immersed in learning with union activists, while also doing intensive study and reading at home....The best part of it for me has been learning and meeting union activists from a variety of unions and sharing experiences together. It's great to see the labor movement excited about higher education."—Mike Matejka, Laborers Local 362, Bloomington, Ill.

America@work

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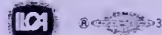
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8

8

VIRTUAL ORGANIZING

Union organizers across the country are harnessing the unique power of the Internet to reach and mobilize union members—more than half of whom have home computers

12

PUTTING THE BRAKES ON UNSAFE TRUCKS

Mexican trucks, which are required to pass few or no safety inspections and which carry uninspected produce, will begin traveling on U.S. highways starting Jan. 1—and the Teamsters and Transit Union are working to make the public aware of the dangers

14

GOOD JOBS, STRONG COMMUNITIES, A VOICE FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Delegates to the AFL-CIO's Twenty-Third Constitutional Convention head to Los Angeles next month, where they will discuss building good jobs and strong communities, address the challenges of the new economy and share plans to create a strong political voice for working families

16

HIGH HOPES, LITTLE TRUST

Nearly 75 percent of young Americans who don't have college degrees face limited job opportunities—and increasingly, this forgotten majority is willing to come together with other workers to gain a voice at work

18

DON'T TAKE OLDER VOTERS FOR GRANTED

Older and retired union members remain strong advocates of working family issues, but overall retiree voting patterns are becoming more conservative—reinforcing the need for union leaders to reach out to their older members and retirees

4 REMEMBERING LANE KIRKLAND

5 CURRENTS

Harvesting a Voice@Work

Big year for bargaining talks

21 OUT THERE

Can't beat the blues
Plane message

22 TOOLBOX

Freedom to choose a voice at work

23 HOMEPAGE


Publications: *Steelworker Alley*

Convention: CLUW's 25th anniversary

Television: "Sing Faster"

Music: *Fellow Workers*





In memory: Lane Kirkland, who led the AFL-CIO from 1979 to 1995, will be remembered as one of the master builders of the American union movement.

REMEMBERING

Lane Kirkland

For Lane Kirkland, president emeritus of the AFL-CIO, joining the union movement was a natural step after his experiences in his native South Carolina, where he grew up witnessing the working conditions of friends and neighbors in the town's textile mills.

That insight sparked a lifelong concern about the plight of working families—and guided him during nearly 60 years as a warrior for working people. When he died of lung cancer Aug. 14 at age 77, he left a legacy of service to working families that stretches from the cotton mills of South Carolina to the shipyards of Gdansk, Poland.

"Lane Kirkland stood shoulder to shoulder with his mentor, George Meany, as one of the master builders of the modern American labor movement," says AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

After he retired in 1995, Kirkland described his philosophy of trade unionism to *The Washington Post*: "The role of the trade unions is to try to keep big people from kicking around little people without a reaction. Your capacity to defend yourself is far greater if you're organized, if you do it as a union, rather than as an individual."

During his 16-year tenure as president, Kirkland sought to modernize the union movement by expanding the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Silver Spring, Md., creating the Labor Institute for Public Affairs and putting into place programs to eliminate the conflict between unions in organizing campaigns.

This past July, Kirkland received the first honorary degree bestowed by the George Meany Center for Labor Studies for his dedi-

Workers' champion: Lane Kirkland greets President Clinton at the 1993 AFL-CIO Convention in San Francisco.



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

Honored: In July, the George Meany Center for Labor Studies awarded Lane Kirkland the first honorary award for his dedication to the education of workers. His wife, Irena Kirkland, accepted the award on his behalf.



RAY CROWELL/PAGE ONE

cation to the education of workers. During his term, he expanded the mission of the labor studies center to include training not only for international union staff, but for local leaders and trade unionists from around the world. He also sponsored the Antioch College degree program, the forerunner of the National Labor College.

When he was elected AFL-CIO president in 1979, he called on the family of unions to reunite—and within 10 years, the UAW, Teamsters, Mine Workers and Longshoremen were part of the federation.

A key supporter of major civil rights legislation, Kirkland was instrumental in creating a diverse leadership in the federation. He presided over the election of the first women and the first Latinos to the Executive Council and the addition of more African American members.

He led the fight for working families against the onslaught of the Reagan-Bush anti-worker administrations. He also forcefully and courageously backed free trade unionism throughout the world, most notably in South Africa, China and Poland, where his early and strong support of Solidarnosc was crucial in bringing freedom to Poland and other Eastern European countries. In 1994, President Clinton gave Kirkland the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, saying Kirkland "tirelessly worked to strengthen democracy and to further the cause of human rights."

As globalization of economic power accelerated, he led the battle against the North American Free Trade Agreement and sought to equip the union movement to better fight its battles against multinational companies by expanding the international role of the federation, laying the foundation for the Solidarity Center and global union efforts to fight the impact of the new economy.

After his death, leaders from around the world paid tribute to the man who led the American union movement during 16 difficult years.

President Clinton called Kirkland "one of the towering figures in the American labor movement. For nearly five decades, he was a guiding force for workplace fairness, dignity and innovation, and a catalyst for international democracy."

Saying he was "truly a great man," Vice President Al Gore praised Kirkland's "grand vision of a strong and diverse union dedicated to securing not simply economic justice for working men and women everywhere, but social justice for all."

A member of the International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots since 1942, Kirkland served in the Merchant Marine in World War II. After the war, he graduated from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service before joining the AFL, which became the AFL-CIO with the merger of the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1955. He fought for union pensions and supported labor's efforts in national political campaigns.

In 1960, he became executive assistant to AFL-CIO President George Meany. He was elected secretary-treasurer in 1969 and president in 1979, after Meany retired. He retired as president in 1995.

Kirkland is survived by his wife, Irena, a German concentration camp survivor; five daughters from a previous marriage; five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. ■ —James B. Parks

Building Dreams

Four low-income families in Yolo County, Calif., are new home owners through the help of members of the Northern California Carpenters and Painters and Allied Trades, who pitched in after a shortage of Habitat for Humanity volunteers jeopardized completion of the project and threatened the group's grant funding.

When the number of volunteers building the four houses began to dwindle this year, Corey Strack, a Carpenters organizer who read an article about Habitat's dilemma, did what he does best: Organize workers.

"I just called around and got a bunch of guys to volunteer," he says. "I asked four guys and got 12." He also recruited members of the Painters and Allied Trades to put finishing touches on the homes.

Between late May and mid-July, the union volunteers used their skills to finish building the houses on time and, as a result, saved Habitat's funding.

For Strack, this just may be the beginning of organizing Habitat crews. "It depends on how much work and help they need. If they need the help, we'll be out there." @



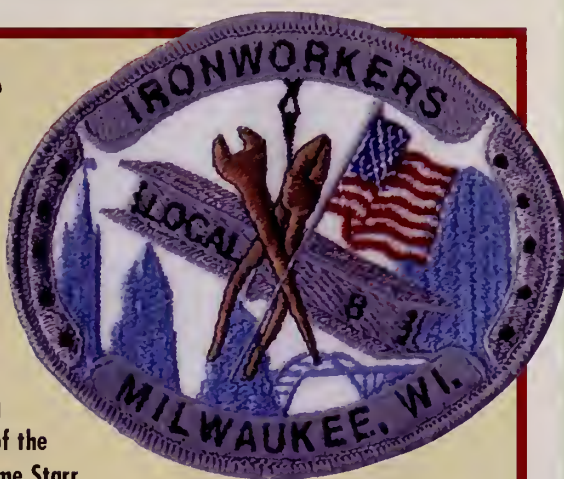
ALEX KOTHNY

Helping hands: Members of the Carpenters and Painters and Allied Trades were key to saving a Habitat for Humanity project in Northern California.

In Tribute

Members of the Milwaukee Brewers baseball team added an Ironworkers patch to their uniforms to honor three members of Ironworkers Local 8 who were killed July 14 in a crane accident during construction of the roof of the club's new stadium. Jerome Starr, 52, Jeffery Wishcer, 40, and William

DeGrave, 39, were killed when a crane collapsed while lifting a 425-ton section of the stadium's retractable roof. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Milwaukee County District Attorney's office are investigating the accident, which took place during wind gusts of up to 25 miles an hour. Union leaders have criticized the safety practices of the stadium's roof contractor, Mitsubishi. @



UAW Soars Sky High at Lear

The 2,591 workers at all eight plants recently acquired by Lear Corp. won a voice at work and UAW recognition in June, joining about 1,400 other Lear workers who have won representation since November 1998.

When workers at United Technologies' auto parts plants tried to exercise their freedom to join a union, they were met with fierce anti-union tactics, UAW organizers recall. But after UT was purchased in May by Lear Corp., which had found that its unionized workforce at other plants boosted productivity and efficiency, the company adopted a policy of strict neutrality and agreed to card-check recognition.

"This is another example of what happens when workers are given a chance to form unions without being harassed and intimidated by their employers," UAW President Stephen Yokich says. @

SPOTLIGHT

Harvesting a Voice@Work

Thirteen days after winning card-check representation, 430 mushroom pickers, packers and other workers at Quincy Farms in Quincy, Fla., ratified their first contract as members of the Farm Workers.

The quick step from card-check to contract followed a three-year battle that involved picketing, mass arrests, lawsuits and a boycott of Quincy's PRIME label mushrooms—efforts that produced a corporate about-face that now is creating workplace harmony and respect. At the contract signing, UFW President Arturo Rodriguez said management's recognition of the workers' choice demonstrates that "the union and the employees can be an asset to the business rather than being enemies," and that an organizing campaign involving African American, Latino and white workers shows "we can all come together to bring about needed change."

Calling Quincy Farms a model for progressive labor relations, UFW leaders say the agreement sets the standard for the agricultural industry in Florida, California and across the nation.

The new contract, which ends the boycott, raises hourly workers' wages between 25 cents and 50 cents retroactively to May 1, provides for profit sharing, improves pension and health care coverage and adds seniority and grievance provisions. @



LEN KAMINSKY

Signing on: UFW President Arturo Rodriguez joins Quincy Farms President and CEO Dennis Zensen and new UFW members in signing a first contract covering 430 mushroom pickers.



At the table: IAM President Thomas Buffenbarger and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka march with Boeing workers at an August contract rally in Seattle.

JIM LEVITT/IMPACT VISUALS

Big Year for Bargaining Talks

Job security and retirement are the main issues in a heavy summer season of union contract negotiations in many of the nation's major industries.

UAW and the Big Three automakers began bargaining talks in June, with contracts set to expire Sept. 14. The key issues for the 405,000 employees are job security, job preservation and job growth, says UAW President Stephen Yokich. The UAW wants the automakers to cease shipping jobs offshore and to low-wage companies at home, and instead invest money in more good-paying, secure jobs that allow workers and management to focus on increasing quality and productivity, he says.

Job security, health care and pensions are the principal issues in talks between Boeing and the 49,000 Machinists who overwhelmingly said in recent surveys that improvements in job security, health care and retirement benefits are the keys to a successful, new agreement. Some 65 percent of membership cited outsourcing and subcontracting of Boeing work to domestic companies as the principal threat to job security.

On Aug. 6, some 25,000 Steelworkers ratified new five-year contracts with U.S. Steel and Bethlehem Steel that "provide a strong pattern for reaching settlements with the rest of the industry," says USWA President George Becker. The agreements provide a \$2-an-hour wage increase, increased pension benefits, increased sickness and accident benefits, and, for the first time, benefits for surviving spouses of workers who die before retirement. The pact also strengthens job security initiatives and makes it easier for workers to choose a voice at work by expanding employer neutrality language.

This summer's talks also brought an end to several long-running disputes. After a bitter 14-month battle, the Teamsters reached agreement with Anheuser-Busch on a five-year deal that contains a written commitment by the company to keep all 12 of its breweries open over term, guaranteeing jobs for 8,000 employees.

Another strike ended after 118

days on Aug. 2 at Newport News Shipbuilding in Virginia, when 9,200 Steelworker's approved a new 58-month contract. The key wins were a 78 percent increase in pension benefits, a successorship clause guaranteeing union jobs, strict limits on subcontracting and a 24 percent wage increase.

In other notable collective bargaining wins:

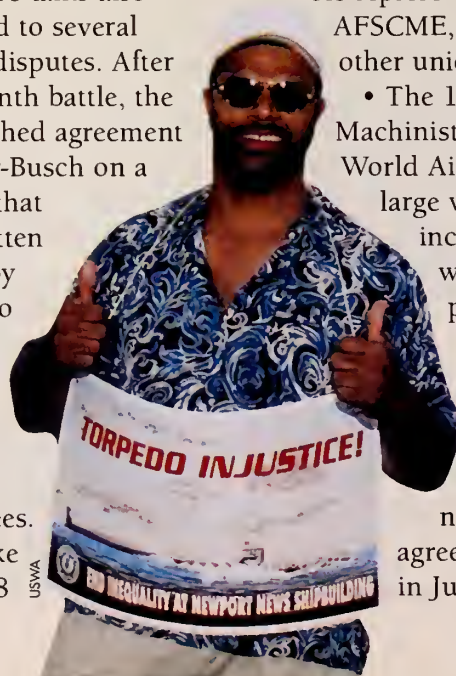
- Unity was the key to victory for 13,000 IBT carhauleders who ratified a new four-year contract in July that dramatically improved pension benefits and wages while providing better job security language. Teamsters at Northwest Airlines also approved a new five-year pact that gives the 11,000 workers significant improvements in pay, pensions and job security.

- In New Jersey, some 40,000 state workers, members of the Communications Workers, lobbied state lawmakers, who pushed for the state to reach a fair four-year agreement that includes a 14.5 percent pay raise. Meanwhile, negotiations are continuing for another 16,000 state employees represented by

AFSCME, AFT and other unions.

- The 16,000 Machinists at Trans World Airlines gained large wage

increases, along with a back pay award for flight attendants and better pension benefits, in their new 18-month agreement ratified in July. @



Teamsters Launch Anti-Corruption DRIVE

The Teamsters unveiled a comprehensive internal anti-corruption initiative to remove any traces of organized crime from the union and to demonstrate the IBT's commitment to running a clean union.

"I made the promise that we would take dramatic steps to remove any remaining influence of organized crime from our union, and set new, higher standards for a corruption-free union," says IBT President James P. Hoffa. The new plan is a "self-policing plan unlike any other union," he adds.

The IBT executive board on July 29 adopted the four-point "Teamsters Anti-Corruption Plan" plan, which calls for the union to establish clear standards of conduct, educate officers and members concerning the standards, establish internal procedures to guarantee effective and impartial enforcement of the standards of conduct and identify and remove any remaining organized crime influence within the union.

James Kossler, a former FBI official, will assist Hoffa in implementing the plan by conducting an independent study to identify and determine whether organized crime remains in the union. Edwin Stier, a former federal prosecutor, will serve as consultant.

For the past 10 years, the union has operated under the conditions imposed by a federal consent decree. "Our primary goals in this new anti-corruption effort are to strengthen our union and its democratic practices and to empower the membership to help with this process," Hoffa says. @

Speak Out on Procurement Laws

If companies receive taxpayer-funded federal contracts, they should obey federal laws, right? But it doesn't always happen that way. The U.S. Navy, for instance, continues to award millions of dollars in contracts to Avondale shipyard (now part of Litton Industries), even though a federal administrative law judge ruled in 1998 that Avondale broke labor laws at its New Orleans facility more than 100 times and illegally fired 28 workers. That ruling is on appeal. In fact, the U.S. General Accounting Office reports that more than 260 federal contractors with thousands of safety and health violations still got a total of \$38 billion in awards.

All that could change under a rule proposed by the Clinton administration that could prevent government contracts from going to firms that violate labor, environmental, employment or consumer protection laws. The proposal also would prevent law-breaking companies from charging the government for their legal expenses and end reimbursement of anti-union employer campaigns.

"Taxpayer dollars should not go to chronic lawbreakers," says AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

Union members are encouraged to make their voices heard during the comment period on the proposed federal regulations, which ends Nov. 8. Mail comments to Laurie Duarte, General Services Administration, Federal Acquisition Regulation Secretariat (MVR), 1800 F St., N.W., Room 4035, Washington, D.C. 20405. Or e-mail them: farcase.99-010@gsa.gov. Cite FAR case 99-010i. ☐

Working with Performers with Disabilities

Three unions—Television and Radio Artists, Screen Actors and Actors' Equity—have created a special resource card that provides information to the entertainment industry on employing performers with disabilities.

The unions are distributing English and Spanish versions of *Everything You Wanted to Know About Working with Performers with Disabilities But Were Afraid to Ask* to production companies, talent agencies, casting offices and other industry-related groups. The resource card answers questions about employing disabled performers, furnishes contact numbers for arranging accommodations they may need and answers many common questions, says AFTRA President Shelby Scott.

SAG President Richard Masur says, "Our goal is to acknowledge the many disabled performers [who are] only limited by other people who think these talented professionals can't do the job." Ron Silver, president of Actors' Equity, says actors with disabilities still remain vastly underrepresented on stage as well as on film and television. "Hopefully, this resource will serve to counter this inequity." ☐

OUT FRONT

Webster's tells us a "community" is "all the people living in a particular district." But many see the unions that represent local workers as separate institutions rather than an integral part of a healthy community.

A big job for today's unions is breaking down the walls of perception that distance unions from our communities. We have to take more active roles in improving our communities and we have to let our neighbors know about the work we're doing. This is essential if we are to enlist and return the support needed to transform communities into nurturing places for working families to live and work.

We have great stories to tell about how we help create and retain family-sustaining jobs, raise living standards, provide working families a voice in their government and advocate fair treatment of all working people. Union capital and union labor, in partnership with the community and the private sector, created affordable housing in Philadelphia by rebuilding the historic Carl Mackley Apartments, with funding from the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust. In more than two dozen cities—including Miami and Los Angeles—union members and community allies have won living wage laws, each with the potential to lift thousands of working families out of poverty. UNITE members and clergy helped save 550 jobs at Warnaco sewing plants in three states by invoking community pressure to convince the company to change its mind about shutting down the plants.

By encouraging working families to register, vote and become politically active, unions ensure that working families' voices are heard in local, as well as state and national, government. The AFL-CIO's *2000 in 2000* initiative makes it more likely that local workers will be represented at all levels of government by people just like them, rather than by wealthy bankers and lawyers.

Union apprenticeship and safety programs save lives on local jobsites. Boston's massive highway construction project benefits from a multiunion Labor-Management Health and Safety Committee that ensures worker safety and work quality are top priorities.

Thousands of union community services volunteers around the country help rescue communities stricken by disaster—recent floods, hurricanes and the Oklahoma City bombing are examples—and tirelessly contribute to day-to-day efforts to meet local needs in soup kitchens, homeless shelters, blood drives and more.

And when workers of color, women and low-wage workers receive unfair treatment on the job—whether in California strawberry fields, northeastern garment districts or southern poultry plants—union members are side-by-side with civil and human rights groups leading the call for justice.

Unions and our members are the community. Let's make sure America knows all about it.

President Sweeney is pictured above with Philadelphia families celebrating the June reopening of the Carl Mackley Apartments. ☐

Strong Unions, Strong Communities



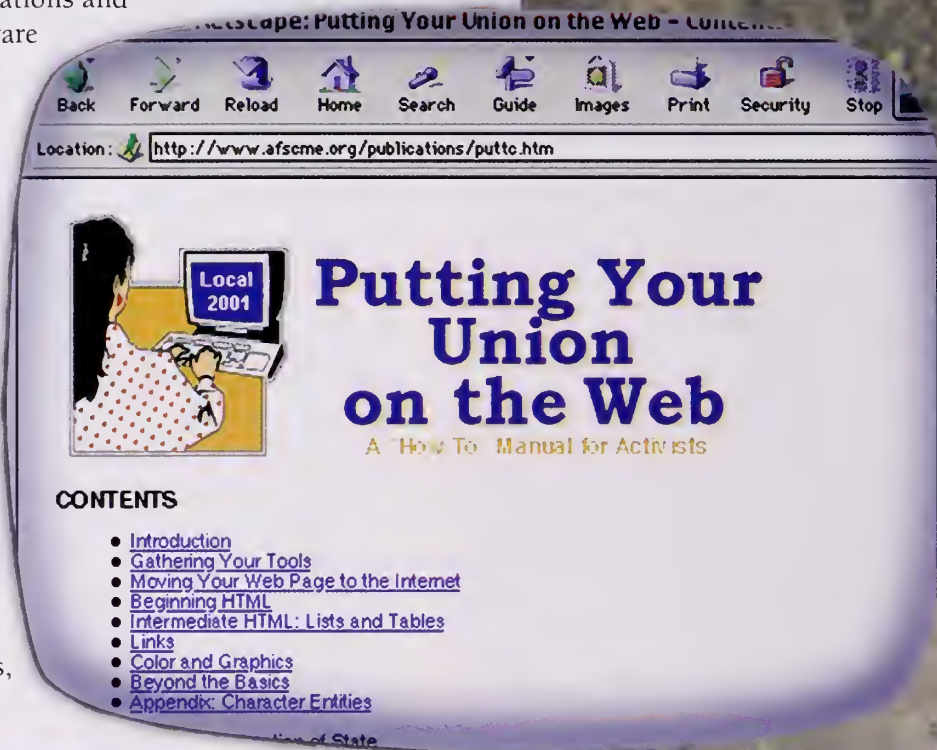
BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

Virtual Organ

"Perma-temp" workers at Microsoft

spend their days pushing the boundaries of technology by designing next-generation computer applications and developing innovative new software programs. So it is as natural as double-clicking on a mouse that the workers—who are unfairly classified as temporary workers and denied benefits and job security—are using such high-tech tools as the Internet to gain a voice on the job.

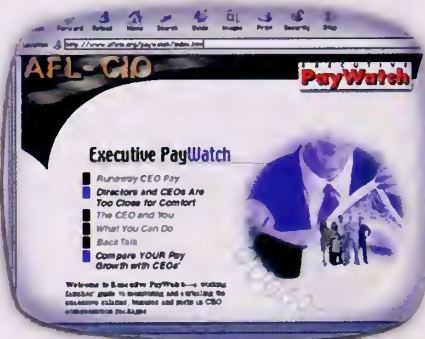
Activists with the Washington Alliance of Technology Workers (WashTech), a Communications Workers affiliate in Seattle, are using electronic mail and the World Wide Web to "send out information the people aren't going to get anywhere else," such as Microsoft policies and overtime regulations, says Mike Blain, a leader of campaign. "Before we did it, people



E-mail, the Internet and Other High-Tech Tools for Reaching Out to Working Families

didn't know what was going on," Blain says. WashTech uses an e-mail listserv—an electronic newsletter that gets delivered directly into readers' computers—to keep workers up to date and to solicit their experiences with overtime abuses at Microsoft. The group posts news reports, legislative and legal updates and solicits new members on its website, www.washtech.org (see *America@work*, May 1999).

WashTech went one step further, maximizing the Internet's interactive capabilities, by conducting a survey of Microsoft workers and tallying the results via the Web. "Compiling data took two days [on the Web] because the information was



JIM LEVITT/IMPACT VISUALS

zing



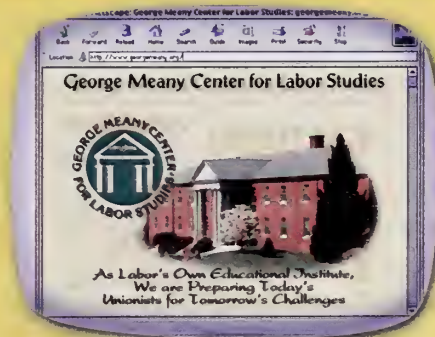
Wired: Microsoft "perma-temp" workers gained a voice on the job with CWA through the Internet.

saved directly into a database," Blain explains. "If we had to do it by hand, it would have taken forever." The survey yielded crucial information and organizing leads: 90 percent of workers surveyed said they were concerned about full disclosure of staffing agency "bill rates," making it WashTech's top issue, and new members were invited to join after they submitted the survey on the Web. The workers recently celebrated their first victory when 18 workers in the accounting software division formed a collective bargaining unit at Microsoft.

CWA President Morton Bahr notes that "Most CWA members and prospective members are technical or information-based workers, so it's natural that we have long used the Internet—even before the advent of the Web—to reach out in organizing drives, such as at WashTech and airline passenger service groups currently, and also to communicate regularly with members in the various industry sectors we represent, such as telecommunications, broadcasting, cable, journalism, publishing and higher education."

Organizing links

Union organizers across the country are harnessing the unique power of the Internet to reach and mobilize workers. Fifty-seven percent of all unionized workers have home computers, according to a 1999 survey by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, and more workers than ever have comput-



Internet for Union Activists at Meany Center
The National Labor College of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies is offering an "Internet for Union Activists" class Dec. 6–10 at its Silver Spring, Md., campus. For registration information, call 800-462-4237; e-mail: info@georgemeany.org; website: www.georgemeany.org.

Bookmarks

Corporate Research on the Internet for Labor Researchers is free from Cindy Lamberts, AFL-CIO Corporate Affairs Department, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; e-mail: clamberts@aflcio.org.

Manual of Corporate Investigation from the AFL-CIO Food and Allied Service Trades Department is updated regularly and is available for \$25 by contacting FAST, 888 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-737-7200; website: www.fastaflcio.org.

Putting Your Union on the Web, a "how to" manual for activists, provides the step-by-step technical guidance needed to get up and running; website: www.afscme.org/publications/puttc.htm.

Why the Internet Matters to Organized Labor, an introduction to the importance of interactive technology to union organizing with examples and how tos, was written by the Ad Hoc Committee on Labor and the Web, made up of representatives from six international unions and the AFL-CIO; website: www.mindopen.com/laborweb. @

ers at work. E-mail and websites give organizers powerful tools to communicate with workers who are struggling to gain a voice on the job—effectively and conveniently for technologically proficient workers.

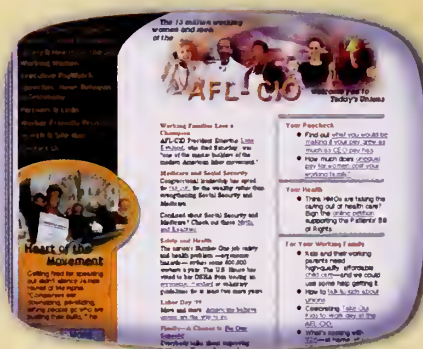
Advanced Internet technology played a crucial role in last year's huge organizing victory by United Airlines ticket agents and cargo workers, who joined the Machinists (see *America@work*, August 1998). With 19,000 workers spread all over the country, communicating the union message quickly and effectively was a daunting task. By using a frequently updated website, organizers augmented a communications strategy that also included mailings and worksite committee meetings. The site included press releases, photos and testimonials from workers around the county, a weekly election summary, an area to submit comments and questions, a section on questions and answers about the election and IAM, handbills that could be downloaded, sample provisions from IAM contracts with other airlines and an online authorization card. The result: the biggest private-sector union organizing win in 20 years. Since then, the United Airlines workers have negotiated and won a strong first contract, eliminating an unfair tiered pay scale and boosting wages and benefits.

The Internet strategy at United worked particularly well because of the technology-savvy workforce, many of whom use computers at work and at home.

The Internet and related technologies also foster interactive communication, creating a dialogue among workers. E-mail, for instance, simplifies communication among large groups of people.

The interactive nature of the Internet means organizers can create fun, personally tailored sites, such as quizzes on work issues (www.kclc.org/why_union/c_quiz.html, from the King County Labor Council in Seattle), and provide such informational tools as the AFL-CIO Paywatch site (www.paywatch.org), where workers can enter their salary and find out how much money they would be making if their pay had risen at the same rate as the pay of a corporate CEO. In addition, a vast storehouse of corporate information is easily accessible on the Web, making research easier than ever. Taken together, these tools

AFL-CIO Website Has New Look



Be sure to check out the AFL-CIO's newly redesigned website at www.aflcio.org. The new design and graphics make searches fast and easy. Popular sites such as Executive Pay Watch and Working Women are augmented with sites organized by subject that include issues key to keeping working families informed. @

make the Internet indispensable to building the union movement.

Union organizers say the Internet will never—and should never—be a substitute for one-on-one communication with workers during organizing campaigns. "It doesn't replace face-to-face visits," says Andy Banks, who teaches Internet techniques as part of strategic research for organizing at the National Labor College of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Maryland. Rather, the Internet means union information can be available to workers at home 24 hours a day, away from the prying eyes of a supervisor (see box, next page). Because material does not have to be printed and mailed, union organizers can respond quickly—and at lower cost than by fax—to emerging issues.

The Internet is becoming part of unions' overall communication strategies for recruiting workers. The Professional and Technical Engineers, for instance, posts websites for campaigns at Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory and at United Airlines' engineering and technical services (www.ifpte.org). They include charts comparing benefits of union and nonunion employees, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and authorization cards that can be downloaded. IFPTE Secretary-Treasurer Greg Junemann says the Web augments traditional organizing tactics. "We are hitting them every way we can," he says. "The Web can't be the only thing you do. It's the cherry on the sundae." Junemann says he became aware of the potential for using new technology for organizing after a group of recently organized workers at the Army Corps of Engineers in Chicago spontaneously began e-mailing their colleagues in New York, telling them how much their lives had improved since they got a union. Shortly after, the New York workers formed a union. "I thought it was a stupid idea," Junemann admits. "Until we won."

The Food and Commercial Workers recruit potential members by including the union's Workers' Advocacy Project on its website (www.ufcw.org), offering aid to nonunion employees whose rights on the job have been violated. Part of the advice on the site includes organizing a union, "the only solution with staying power," complete with an e-mail form. UFCW leaders say they've received several organizing leads from their website. The Steelworkers also has an online form (www.uswa.org/body_organize) work-

Little Brother May Be Watching You

What's legal and what's private in cyberspace? That's a question many online union activists are asking. Because the technology is so new, labor law just now is beginning to catch up. According to the National Labor Relations Board, employers are not allowed to prohibit all nonbusiness use of e-mail at work, in part because that might interfere with workers' protected rights to communicate about forming unions (www.nlr.gov/press/r2310.html). However, the board left the door open for "reasonable rules limiting the use of e-mail in order to address particular problems." The first case of its kind was settled on the eve of going to trial at the NLRB. It involved engineers at Pratt & Whitney in West Palm Beach, Fla., who were suspended without pay for using company e-mail to discuss forming a union with the IFPTE. The company did not set comparable limits on itself—and sent out anti-union messages over its e-mail system every day. With IFPTE providing legal help to the organizing committee, Pratt & Whitney changed its policy and told employees that they could use company e-mail to communicate about forming a union.

As for privacy, workers and union organizers should not expect their e-mail or records of their Web-browsing habits at work to be private. Employers are allowed to monitor these. In fact, there are software programs with such ominous names as Little Brother and Message Inspector that keep track of employee e-mail and website-viewing habits. Cyber-organizers can tailor their strategies to focus on computers that workers can access at home, the library or the union hall. "Everything has to be done with a measure of caution and a dose of reality," warns Michael Gan, a union attorney specializing in new technology issues at the Washington, D.C., law firm Peer and Gan. ☐

ers can submit after reading about the importance of unions ("Tired of low wages and benefits, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, no rights and no respect from the boss?" the site asks visitors). The site includes information on how unions work, workers' rights during organizing campaigns, news of recent victories and what workers can "expect from the boss."

Search engines and other tools

The Internet also is an effective tool for organizers in communicating among workers and researching companies before launching campaigns.

Locating workers: AFGE, like many other unions, uses such online

address and phone directories as www.bigfoot.com and www.switchboard.com to enable organizers to contact workers away from the worksite. The union also uses such Web-based mapping sites as www.mapquest.com to simplify routes for house calls.

Communicating among union staff: USWA uses a private intranet to link organizers. The private, internal website includes pamphlets and other on-site organizing tools that can be downloaded, and soon will feature bulletin boards and chat rooms where organizers can share winning strategies and swap tips.

Conducting research: Much of the information union leaders need about a company to wage successful organizing campaigns is

available on the Internet. For example, annual financial information from publicly held companies filed on a Form 10-K, is available at www.tenkwizard.com. Company websites are full of information and can be found with such search engines as <http://infospace.com>. "Companies disclose things on their website that they would need to disclose at bargaining," such as their locations and number of employees, Banks says.

Researchers at the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees, for instance, use the Internet to track expansion plans at Marriott Hotels. "Because Marriott is a publicly traded company and files with the Securities and Exchange Commission, I can track their business plan pretty closely," says Faith Raider, a HERE Local 2 researcher in San Francisco. "I go to financial chat groups to see what people are saying about corporate restructuring."

Researchers and organizers are saving time and money by getting online. "One way to figure out who owns a hotel is through [the California] Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC)," Raider explains. "Before, we used to have to call the ABC office and, depending on the clerk, we could get the information. Now, they've put all of that information on the Web" at www.abc.ca.gov. "The Internet has made gathering information on companies much easier," she says.

The Internet is revolutionizing the way unions collect data and spread the word about what it means to have a voice on the job. No one is ready to stop making house calls or holding meetings, but union leaders are using all the new tools they can to get information in the hands of current—and potential—members. And as WashTech's Blain puts it, "Information is a powerful organizing tool."

How is your organization using the Internet for organizing, research and building your union? Send examples to Laureen Lazarovici, AFL-CIO Publications Division, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20006; phone: 202-637-5037; e-mail: llazarov@aflcio.org. ☐

Networking: The Machinists successfully organized 19,000 ticket agents and cargo workers located across the country in large part through a website that included press releases, photos and testimonials from workers around the country and an area to submit comments and questions.

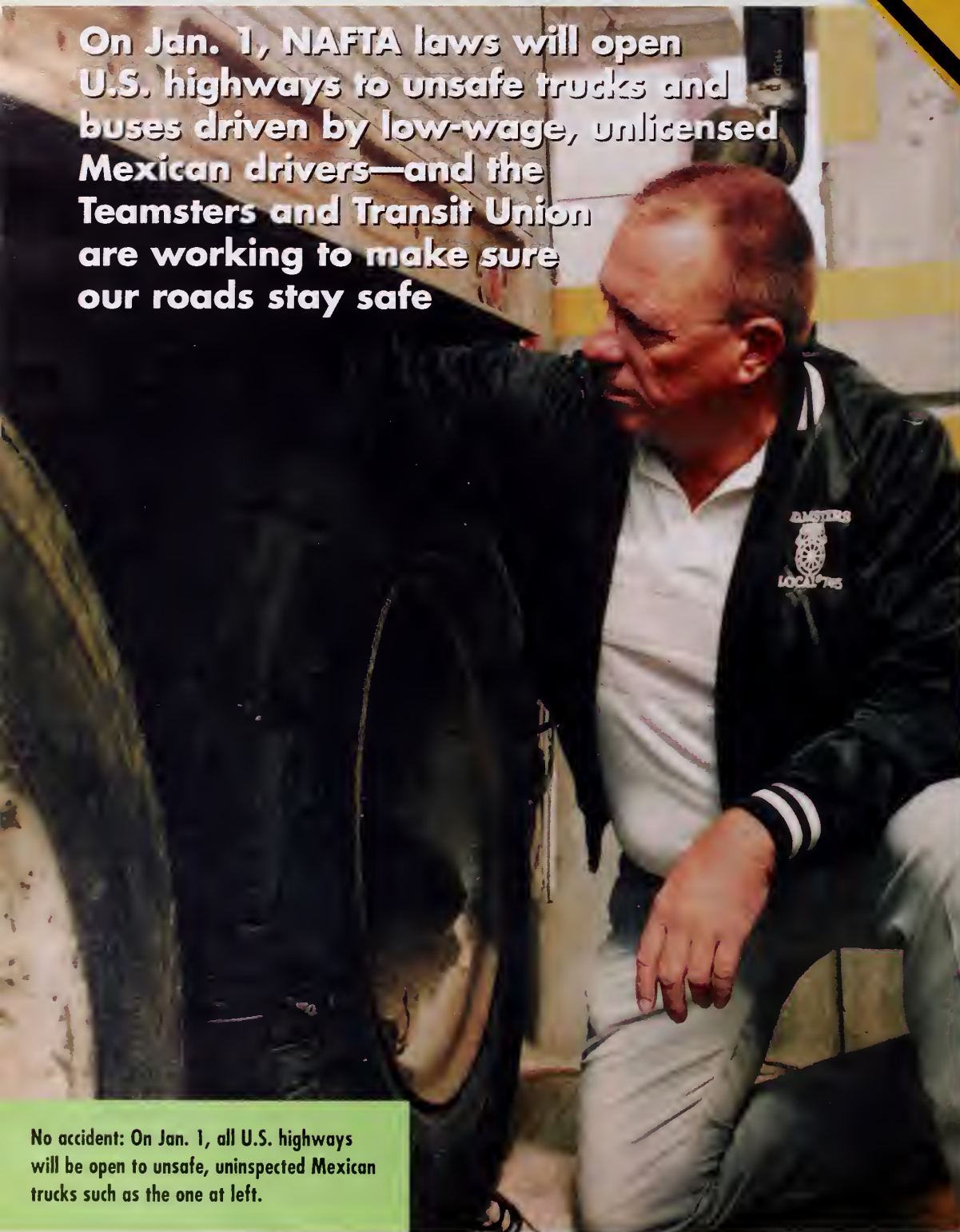


PUTTING THE

BRAKES ON UNSAFE TRUCKS

By
LAUREEN
LAZAROVICI

On Jan. 1, NAFTA laws will open U.S. highways to unsafe trucks and buses driven by low-wage, unlicensed Mexican drivers—and the Teamsters and Transit Union are working to make sure our roads stay safe



No accident: On Jan. 1, all U.S. highways will be open to unsafe, uninspected Mexican trucks such as the one at left.

Two years ago, Benjamin and Carmen Rea and their friends Jaime and Myriam Esperanza Rodriguez were returning from a dinner trip to Tijuana in their minivan. But instead of making it back home to Orange County, Calif., they became part of what one witness described as “a war zone.” A truck driven by a Mexican driver far beyond the legal 20-mile commercial zone slammed into the minivan and another car, killing the two couples and injuring several others.

“There was glass on the ground and cars all over the place,” a California Highway Patrol spokeswoman said in newspaper accounts. “I got to the scene 30 minutes later and both cars [that had burned] were still smoking.” Another witness told the *Orange County Register*, “It looked like a bomb had gone off in the middle of a bunch of cars. It was the worst thing I’d ever seen.”

Under the North American Free Trade Agreement, Mexican trucks currently are permitted to travel within a 20-mile commercial zone beyond the U.S. border; the collision that killed the two couples was many miles outside that buffer. The inspector general at the federal Department of Transportation says that Mexican trucks have been spotted as far from the border as New York, North Dakota, Iowa and Wyoming, in violation of current rules.

TEAMSTERS

But on Jan. 1, NAFTA laws will open all U.S. highways to Mexican trucks. Unlike the United States, Mexico has no vehicle maintenance standards, no safety ratings system and no restrictions on how many hours a trucker can drive. Many Mexican drivers make \$7 a day—and unlike in the United States, there is no drug and alcohol testing of Mexican drivers. The arrest and driving records of Mexican drivers are not available to U.S. authorities.

Making our highways safe

To ensure the Rea and Rodriguez horror is not repeated on U.S. highways, the Teamsters and the Amalgamated Transit Union are campaigning to keep the U.S.–Mexico border closed to dangerous Mexican trucks, commercial passenger vehicles and unqualified Mexican drivers, and are urging the federal government to take action to stop the law from taking effect.

“Next New Year’s Day, Americans may face a flood of unsafe Mexican trucks driven by untrained, unlicensed and virtually unpaid drivers,” warns IBT President James P. Hoffa, in an editorial that appeared in newspapers across the country this spring. Hoffa notes that the Orange County inferno was not an isolated incident in this country: In 1995, a Mexican driver was killed when his load of jet fuel ignited, and a 16-year-old uninsured driver and his load of sulfuric acid were involved in a major spill.

The Teamsters and the ATU successfully urged 260 members of Congress—a bipartisan group representing more than half of the House of Representatives—to sign a letter to President Clinton urging him to keep the border closed to unsafe Mexican trucks and buses and unqualified Mexican drivers. Members of Congress joined Hoffa at a June news conference where they called for

putting the brakes on unsafe vehicles.

In a letter to members of Congress, ATU President James La Sala said with the lack of sufficient resources and significant safety concerns, this is no time to open the U.S.–Mexico border. “To do so would create a perilous situation on our highways and threaten the safety of American workers and the traveling public,” he said.

Of the approximately 11,000 Mexican trucks that cross the border every day, only one half of 1 percent were inspected in 1997, according to a 1998 DOT report. Of the small number of 17,332 trucks inspected, 44 percent were unsafe and taken off the road. In the United States, approximately 1.75 million inspections of U.S. commercial trucks resulted in 437,880 trucks (about 25 percent) being placed out of service for safety violations in fiscal year 1998, according to the DOT report.

Commercial passenger vehicles entering the United States from Mexico, such as airport shuttles and tour buses, also are dangerous. During the first five months of 1997, the U.S. General Accounting Office found that inspectors checked only 528 of these vehicles—out of an estimated 90,000 that cross the border daily. “The dearth of safety inspections, coupled with insufficient information on the number and kinds of Mexican-owned commercial passenger vehicles entering the United States means there is no way to determine whether commercial passenger vehicles are being operated safely,” the GAO concluded.

At stake: The safety of America’s families

Because of Mexican truck and bus safety problems, NAFTA provisions called for Mexico to improve their commercial vehicle safety and driver standards. In 1995, DOT



Borderline: Teamsters and ATU members are campaigning to keep the U.S.–Mexico border closed to dangerous Mexican trucks, commercial passenger vehicles and unqualified Mexican drivers.

delayed expanding Mexican truck and bus privileges because of safety concerns. Four years later, these concerns persist.

Last year, the DOT inspector general reported there are not enough inspectors at the border to prevent an influx of unsafe trucks (see *America@work*, April 1999). DOT’s in-house investigator found the department “does not have a consistent enforcement program that provides reasonable assurance of the safety of Mexican trucks entering the United States.”

Inspection gaps provide one more avenue for the flow of illegal drugs and uninspected food into this country, the Teamsters say. Two years ago, schoolchildren in Michigan contracted hepatitis from Mexican-grown strawberries—uninspected fruit that can be brought into this country more easily after Jan. 1.

“Safety is the key issue for the consumer,” says Joan Claybrook, executive director of Public Citizen, which joined the unions in asking members of Congress to sign the letter to Clinton. “This issue affects the consumer, because it is consumers who get killed or injured on the highway.”

Teamsters and ATU members say they plan to work for improved safety standards that will protect American consumers and that unsafe drivers—and the pending border opening—would degrade safety and working standards. “Decades of time and energy have been poured into ensuring the safety of the American trucking industry,” says Joseph Rheim of IBT Local 104 in Phoenix. “To open the door under NAFTA to vehicles that don’t meet those standards is a step backward.” ☐



Hill action: IBT President James P. Hoffa is joined by (left to right) Rep. James Oberstar (D-Minn.), Rep. David Bonior (D-Mich.) and Rep. Jack Quinn (R-NY) at a Capitol Hill press conference on cross-border trucking.

Good Jobs, Strong Communities A Voice for Working Families

Union leaders and activists will come together next month in Los Angeles to celebrate the resurgence of working families and to lay the foundation for even greater success in the new millennium.

Beginning with an unprecedented Working Families Convocation on Saturday, Oct. 9, and continuing through meetings at the Los Angeles Convention Center Oct. 11–13, delegates to the Twenty-Third AFL-CIO Constitutional Convention will discuss how best to create good jobs, strong communities and a voice for working families.

In a series of pre-convention conferences and events, delegates also will focus on ways the union movement can become more effective. The highlight of the pre-convention weekend will be the Working Families Convocation, which will bring together working families from the Los Angeles area with delegates and religious, political and community leaders for a day of celebration and recommitment to the union movement's key goals. President Clinton, California Gov.

Gray Davis (D), the Rev. Jesse Jackson and others are expected to join delegates at the convocation and the Working Families Picnic that follows.

"We are more than just labor leaders, we also are members of the community where we live," says Bridgette Williams, president of the Kansas City (Mo.) Labor Council and a member of the federation's Central Labor Bodies Advisory Council. "The community's issues are our issues. One reason the union movement is growing is that we have begun to build bridges to our communities and let people know that the union contract benefits everyone. This convocation is an excellent way for us to express and celebrate that linkage."

The day before the convocation, Oct. 8, the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice and the AFL-CIO will kick off a three-


day conference, "Forging Partnerships for the New Millennium," to discuss how unions and religious groups can channel their shared values to create partnerships to fight for economic justice in their communities.

The convention business session opens Monday, Oct. 11. The first morning's session is dedicated to creating good jobs through organizing, and each session after will focus on a key union movement strategy.

Building good jobs and strong communities

Many unions are meeting the "change to organize" challenge by redirecting their long-range goals and allocating more resources and staff to organizing. The AFL-CIO works to assist affiliates by sharing best practices and strategies for changing to organize, bargaining to organize, coordinated bargaining and building community coalitions to support organizing.

The results have been encouraging: Some 475,000 workers chose to join unions in 1998, leading to a net gain of 100,000 members—and the union movement is on a pace



BY JAMES B. PARKS

unities milies

to exceed that number this year. From 1995 through 1998, the number of National Labor Relations Board elections grew by 20 percent, and the win rate among workers seeking union membership rose from 49 percent to 51 percent.

But because the workforce is growing rapidly, the increases in union membership have not been enough to keep pace. "There are still millions of unorganized working men and women who need strong representation," says Laborers President Arthur Coia, co-chair of the Executive Council Organizing Committee. "Now is the time for all in the union movement to take the momentum of the past few years, build on it and establish aggressive organizing as the priority."

Unions are at a critical juncture: "Many unions have made major efforts to shift resources to organizing and increase coordination with each other, and the results are clear," says SEIU President Andrew Stern, co-chair with Coia of the Executive Council Organizing Committee. "Our challenge is to

expand those efforts like never before."

To be a strong voice for workers, it is crucial to build communitywide support for the freedom of working men and women to choose a union. Unions are developing partnerships at the national and grassroots level with religious, civil rights and community groups to spread the message that strong unions help create strong communities. The convention's opening session will give delegates the opportunity to debate ways to make that happen.

Good jobs and the global economy

The decade-long economic boom has not been a bonanza for working families. Despite increased productivity, workers' pay is stagnant, and the gap between the rich and poor is greater than at any time since the 1920s, with the richest 10 percent of the nation controlling 73 percent of the wealth in 1997, up from 50 percent in 1976. Meanwhile, corporate executive salaries skyrocket, while companies pursue the low road of exploiting child labor and low wages abroad as they downsize, close plants and eliminate good jobs at home.

The best way to reverse these trends is by extending to more working people the economic advantage and greater control over work life that comes through increased access to union membership, here and abroad. The AFL-CIO and unions throughout the world are developing programs to organize workers across national borders to gain equal footing with multinational companies; convention delegates will hear about these efforts and discuss global economic issues during the afternoon session on the first day. Anti-sweatshop activists will receive the Murray-Green-Meany-Kirkland Award.

Changing to meet the needs of a changing economy

To meet the challenges facing working families in the 21st century, the AFL-CIO has embarked on several initiatives to strengthen the union movement. On the second day of the convention, delegates will review many of these ongoing and proposed initiatives:

- The Working for America Institute, established in 1998, promotes education, training and economic development to advance the interests of working families and their communities.

- The AFL-CIO capital strategies programs help pension fund trustees and managers ensure the \$6 trillion in workers' retirement

assets is invested in the best interests of workers to help them now and at retirement.

- The National Labor College, which graduated its first class in July, gives union activists and members the opportunity to gain a college degree in a program designed for working adults.

- A proposed new national labor charity can give union members more opportunities to share with others in their communities.

- A proposed computer outreach effort to "wire" working families has the potential to increase their access to the information technology of the 21st century.

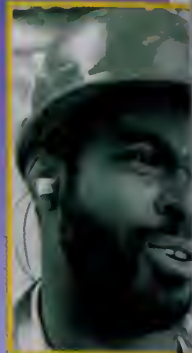
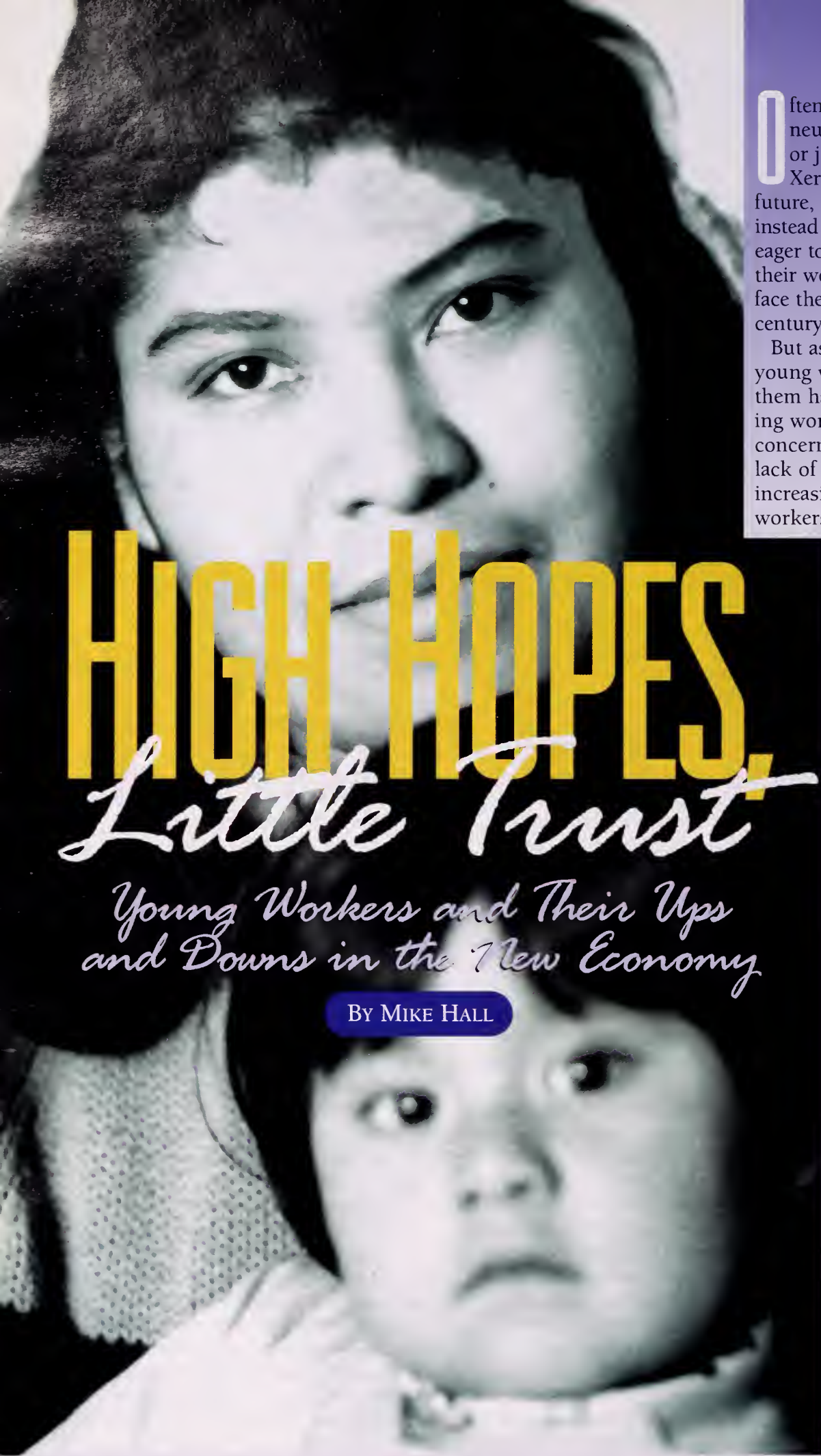
- The New Alliance proposal will include the recommendations of the Executive Council's Committee 2000 to the convention on the structure of the union movement in the new millennium.

Making government work for working families

The next U.S. president and Congress will determine the future of Social Security, Medicare, equal pay, safe workplaces and education, as well as state and local races and the structure of various new laws. On the third day of the convention, delegates will discuss strategies to increase and sustain the legislative and electoral efforts of working families.

Beginning in 1996, unions began educating and mobilizing members year-round on working family issues—and by 1998, 49 percent of union household members voted, helping to elect union members and defeat anti-worker incumbents and such ballot initiatives as California's Proposition 226, which would have taken away union members' political voice.

For 2000 and beyond, the federation is building to last as well as to win, working for legislation and government leadership that will improve the well-being of working families and spreading the message that union membership is the most important tool workers have to lift their lives. The AFL-CIO has developed a two-year Labor 2000 plan for worker mobilization, issue advocacy, voter registration, coalition building, get-out-the-vote activities and training for union activists. Unions are working together to coordinate a grassroots campaign to distribute information to workers at their job sites and provide opportunities for workers to make their voices heard and hold public officials accountable to working families. ☐



Often portrayed as young entrepreneurs making overnight fortunes, or jaded, cynical “Generation Xers” with little hope for the future, today’s young workers are instead idealistic, optimistic and eager to work hard when they begin their work lives. They are willing to face the new demands of a new economy as a new century dawns.

But as their experience in the workforce grows, young workers say employers are not meeting them halfway in dealing with the rapidly changing world of work. They become increasingly concerned about what they see as a fundamental lack of fairness in the economy. They also are increasingly willing to come together with other workers to gain a voice at work.

HIGH HOPES. *Little Trust*

*Young Workers and Their Ups
and Downs in the New Economy*

BY MIKE HALL

Those are the findings of a new report about the nation’s 18-to-34-year-old workforce, *High Hopes, Little Trust: A Study of Young Workers and Their Ups and Downs in the New Economy*, based on a study by Peter D. Hart Research Associates. Commissioned by the AFL-CIO, the study found that when young workers were asked about their job opportunities, a 55-percent-to-29-percent majority see mostly low-paying jobs that offer no benefits. And their perceptions are right. Six out of 10 of the fastest-growing jobs pay wages that hover at the poverty level for a family of four: cashiers, retail sales, home health aides, teacher aides, nurse aides and receptionists, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. At the same time, those jobs offer few, if any benefits. Only 45 percent of young workers polled say they are covered by employer-provided health coverage and only 43 percent have employers that contribute to retirement funds.

The survey also documents that, even as a new millennium dawns, African American, Latino American and women workers continue to struggle with fewer opportunities—after almost four decades of new laws and standards to ensure civil rights.

Losing trust in the American dream

Young men and women entering the workforce hold strong beliefs about the value of hard work and reaching the American dream. But as young workers progress through their work lives and find low-paying jobs that offer little security, they begin to lose faith that business leaders will fairly share the fruits of a booming economy with the workers who sacrifice valuable family

time to their jobs.

When workers reach ages 25–29, 60 percent have little trust that employers will treat workers fairly. When they begin raising families—and 43 percent of those surveyed are parents with children under 18 living in their households—61 percent say their employers fall short when it comes to workplace policies that help working parents. They also increasingly say they support efforts to ensure employers treat their employees properly: 75 percent polled strongly support expanding child care and after-school programs; 70 percent say employers should be required to provide basic health insurance; and 65 percent say they believe employers should be required to provide basic pension benefits.

A forgotten majority

Nearly three quarters of young Americans lack college degrees. While 71 percent of the workers with college educations who were polled say they have full-time, permanent employment, only half of workers without college degrees say they have full-time jobs; the rest say they have part-time, temporary and other substandard arrangements.

Sixty-two percent of college grads have jobs where employers contribute to a retirement plan; only 36 percent of nongrads do. Sixty-seven percent of grads surveyed are covered by employer-provided health insurance, compared with just 36 percent of nongraduates. Sixty-eight percent of young college graduates earn more than \$20,000 a year, while just 36 percent of nongraduates earn as much.

The poll also finds half of the nongrads say they don't make enough to pay their bills, while two-thirds of workers with degrees say they are saving for the future.

Family first

The Hart poll finds that while younger workers are willing to work hard and upgrade their skills to help their employers meet workplace needs, they don't believe their employers are returning the effort by helping workers meet family needs.

Young workers believe a family needs two paychecks to pay the bills and put food on the table, but more than half polled say juggling two jobs and family responsibilities creates stress. They believe more flexible hours and work leave policies, plus greater



availability of affordable child care, would do much to alleviate their struggles. However, 55 percent say their employers fall

short. More than 85 percent of all young workers polled believe in increasing support for child care and after-school programs.

Some 93 percent of young workers surveyed say health benefits are essential to a good job, and 85 percent of respondents believe employers should be required to provide paid health insurance. Eighty-one percent polled say a retirement plan with employer contributions is part of a good job, and 85 percent believe employers should provide such a retirement plan.

Eighty-eight percent of the workers surveyed say opportunities for advancement are important, but nearly four in 10 believe employers are falling short.

Today's young workers say that companies are far too preoccupied with boosting profits, stock prices and executive salaries—often at the expense of their workers. More than half say employers fail to provide regular cost-of-living raises, while more than four in 10 are worried about keeping pace with expenses.

21st century solutions

Young workers polled say the 21st century outlook for working families can be improved through better education and training, collective action by workers—including joining unions—and new laws to ensure minimum standards of fairness in the new economy.

Some 86 percent say the new economy must put more emphasis on education and skills training. More than four in 10 young, blue-collar, African American and Latino American workers fear that affordable education is slipping from their grasps.

By a 2-to-1 margin, young workers say it makes more sense to work as a group rather than as an individual to solve problems on the job. A 54-percent-to-38-percent majority say they would definitely or probably form a union today—up from 47 percent three years ago. And by a 55-percent-to-24-percent edge, young workers believe that unionized workers are better off than nonunion workers.

Most young workers, 58 percent, favor new laws to hold corporations to higher standards of



responsibilities; 84 percent say equal pay laws for women should be strengthened; 75 percent want to require employers to provide pro-rated benefits to part-time workers; and 71 percent favor making it harder to replace full-time jobs with part-time jobs.

Today's young workers know that their world is full of greater instability than their parents' lives. Yet they approach the future with determination and a belief in working together for the common good. In the midst of economic good times, they also firmly believe that we can do better as a nation. As young workers turn increasingly toward unions for a voice on the job and in the economy, unions must do more to offer them greater opportunities for education and advancement, an equal share of the profits they help create and good jobs with health care and retirement security. ■

What the study found...

- While most young workers say today's economy disproportionately rewards corporations and the wealthy, young African American workers see an even greater contrast. Only 27 percent of African American workers surveyed believe employers treat workers fairly, compared with 45 percent of whites; and only 10 percent of African Americans think the distribution of wealth is fair, while 26 percent of white workers do.
- Young Latino workers are more likely than other workers to hold jobs that pay less than \$20,000 a year (52 percent to 41 percent) and less likely than other workers to have employer-provided health insurance (39 percent to 45 percent) or pension programs with employer contributions (36 percent to 43 percent).
- Young working women worry more than men the same age about being able to afford education for their children (49 percent to 39 percent) and having a secure retirement (50 percent to 37 percent). And they also are more likely than men to say they support new laws and programs to meet the needs of working families, such as expanded child care and after-school programs (73 percent to 62 percent) and strengthening equal pay laws for women (71 percent to 52 percent). ■



DON'T TAKE OLDER VOTERS FOR GRANTED

BY MIKE HALL

When union voters go to the polls in November 2000 to send a new president to the White House and thousands of lawmakers to Capitol Hill and state and local offices, voters 65 years and older—who make up the second-largest group (27 percent) of union voters—could cast the deciding ballots for working family candidates and issues.

In states that are important Labor 2000 battlegrounds for working family candidates, union voters aged 60 and older account for even bigger shares of the union household vote: 46 percent in Ohio, 41 percent in Pennsylvania and 34 percent in Wisconsin, according to recent Lake Research-Hart Research/AFL-CIO data.

Can these voters turn an election? The upcoming U.S. Senate race in Pennsylvania



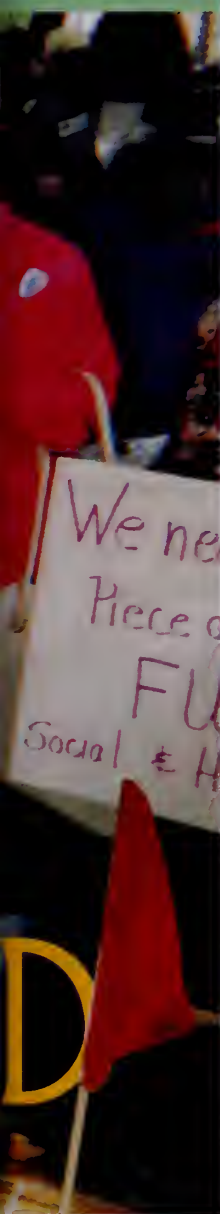
shows the possibilities. In 1994, Rick Santorum was elected to the Senate by a slim 2.6 percent margin (87,000 votes). Although one-third of his total vote, about 570,000, came from seniors, the freshman Republican voted to raise the Social Security retirement age, increase Medicare costs for seniors and cut nursing home quality standards.

But if Keystone State unions mobilize their older voting forces as well as they did in 1998, when some 425,000 union seniors cast ballots, Santorum's 2 percent

edge could be turned into a win for a working family candidate who will work to strengthen Social Security, ensure Medicare costs cover prescription drugs and raise nursing home standards.

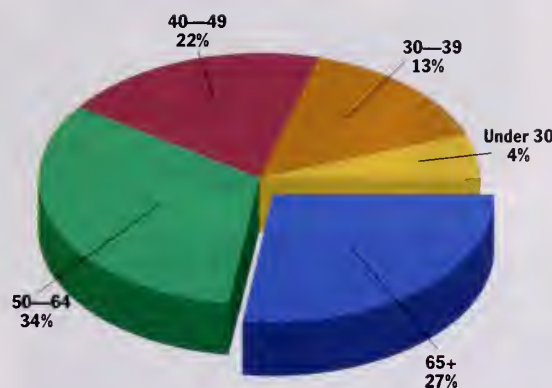
While older and retired union members remain strong advocates of working family issues, overall retiree voting patterns are becoming more conservative. A study by the polling firm Lake, Snell, Perry & Associates shows that from 1988 to 1992, men and women voters 60 and older were much more likely to back working family candidates. But in 1994, when the GOP took control of the U.S. House, senior men voted for anti-worker candidates by a 14 percentage point margin. And in 1998, for the first time since 1980, the senior women's vote for working family candidates slipped below 50 percent, to 48 percent.

UNITE's rapid
program mobilizes
retirees for political
through phone trees.



1998 Union Household Vote by Age Group

Seniors make up the second-largest share of union voters



Source: Lake Research-Hart Research/AFL-CIO

This trend reinforces the need for union leaders to reach out to their older members and retirees. To boost the chances of worker-friendly wins in 2000, the AFL-CIO and its affiliates and allies are developing an older and retired members strategy around key tactics: identifying, recruiting, communicating, educating and mobilizing.

Identifying and recruiting

For some unions, the task of identifying retired voters can be as simple as checking who receives pension checks, says Hani Lipp, southern regional coordinator of the Retiree Service Department at UNITE, which mails pension checks to 250,000 retiree members.

Each May, the United Teachers of New Orleans, an AFT affiliate, hosts a

preretirement workshop and a luncheon for teachers nearing retirement. "There's no pressure or speakers, but we tell them they can come back when the UTNO's Retiree Council hosts its monthly, home-cooked New Orleans lunch and meeting," explains Leatrice Roberts, a council activist. "There, we give them a profile of all the things we do," including ways to stay politically active.

Retired members of many unions, such as the UAW and the Mine Workers, remain union members after retirement. Lipp notes local union leaders can look for potential volunteers by attending meetings of union retiree clubs and other senior organizations or through phone calls and mailings.

"These folks are interested in involvement, but they have to believe they really are wanted," says Bob Rootes, Steelworkers' staff coordinator for SOAR, Steelworkers Organization for Active Retirees. "Too many times we have reached out to them when we need envelopes stuffed. Let them know you want their involvement in a meaningful way."

Communicating and educating

"Just because people are retired, don't make the mistake that they only are about 'retiree issues,'"

Rootes says. "They still care about OSHA, the 40-hour week, trade and many other working family issues. Don't make the mistake of stereotyping what older people care deeply about," Rootes says.

Most retirees also remain interested in issues that affect their profession, says Roberts. "Just because you're not active in the profession doesn't mean

you're not interested. You just don't stop being a teacher."

She points to a lobby day in Baton Rouge this spring where retired teachers joined with American Cancer Society members. They urged state legislators to set aside a large portion of a multimillion-dollar settlement against tobacco companies for smoking prevention programs aimed at school-age children.

While many older retirees have strong union backgrounds, Lipp says some recent retirees may need more information and education. "But they can be persuaded, not on party lines or candidates, but with the issues," she says.

"You have to frame the argument in terms of issues, not party labels," agrees Frank Stella, AFT director of retiree affairs. "Convince people with facts before you ask them to back a candidate."

Mobilizing

To turn out older voters for rallies or legislative action, the USWA retiree organization is taking part in the union's highly successful Rapid Response Program, in which hundreds of local unions are connected by fax and e-mail, a process that generates thousands of letters and phone calls to lawmakers and quickly mobilizes union members for rallies. As a result of Rapid Response, hundreds of retirees took part in a Washington, D.C., rally in spring to call for strong anti-dumping legislation for steel. So far, Rootes says, 36 retiree chapters are hooked into Rapid Response, and as many as 100 of the 170 chapters could be connected by next fall.

UNITE has established a rapid response program to bring out retirees in Florida based on phone trees. In New Orleans, Roberts says, retirees have played key roles in staffing phone banks, canvassing door to door and letter-writing campaigns.

In 1998, contrary to the predictions of political pundits, working families turned back expected big gains by anti-worker candidates in the U.S. House and Senate and in state and local elections. In 2000, older union voters and retirees could well be the key to maintaining the momentum.

For more information on older and retired voters, contact Judy Wineman, director of Older and Retired Workers, in the AFL-CIO Field Mobilization Department at 202-637-3941; e-mail: jwineman@aflcio.org.

HEART OF THE MOVEMENT

Room to Organize

Home run: Teamwork is key for Doug Belanger in his role as UFCW Local 1445 organizer or as coach for a youth baseball league.



"Emotionally heartbreaking" is how Doug Belanger recalls the evening in 1989 that proved to be a critical turning point in his life. Belanger, then a 37-year-old night crew chief at Shaw Supermarket in Auburn, Mass., and his young, 11-person crew had been among the most active workers seeking to join the Food and Commercial Workers. But one by one that April night, the 11 workers "who believed they had the right to get involved and speak out" were called

[National Labor Relations Act] had some teeth," Belanger recalls. "I even told my wife not to worry because we had government protections." Months later, in a conference room at the Yankee Drummer, the National Labor Relations Board upheld the dismissals.

Ten years to the month after he and his crew were fired, Belanger, now Local 1445 organizing director, was back in the same room where the NLRB made its decision. But this time, he watched as the NLRB certified card-check recognition for workers at the Auburn Shaw—and all 2,000 workers in the 13-store central Massachusetts chain.

"I will never forget that sense of righteousness that drove me that night," says Belanger, who describes the events that April as a "blessing in disguise." Local 1445 President Paul Dufault offered Belanger a job as an organizer, and the local union also found jobs at other stores for the 11 fired workers.

Now 48, Belanger has channeled that sense of righteousness, becoming a respected union activist, a selectman on the

Leicester town council, a youth league baseball coach and volunteer teacher at the Boston Archdiocese's Catholic Labor Guild.

Belanger says his decade of activism and dedication to organizing came about after he realized he could be "part of motivating people to empower themselves."

He compares the satisfaction he receives when workers overcome their fears and realize they have the ability to make their voices heard with the feeling he gets when the young ball players he works with get their first hit. "That's what makes me tick."

The key to overcoming workers' fears of being fired or harassed for standing up for their rights is building trust, confidence and relationships. "You just can't go in and say 'sign this card, join the union,'" he says.

Local 1445 never abandoned the Shaw drive, which Belanger describes as "classic organizing"—tenacity and the support of local leadership to stay active and keep the drive alive. "You need that support to have the motivation and self-starting abilities to get up on days and home call or work parking lots for years upon years. You don't want to get halfway and then have the plug pulled."

About three years ago, Shaw workers and Local 1445 decided it was time to intensify their efforts through a new strategy in which teams of volunteer organizers from other unionized shops joined the fight: Deli workers talked to deli workers, Hispanic workers to Hispanic workers. Building on the years of trust and relationships established, Shaw workers across the state came together.

The workers' solidarity, coupled with a change in management, led to a card-check agreement and the second-largest organizing win in Massachusetts in the 1990s.

"We've had a number of successes since that night, but this was the sweetest. When we were setting up for the card-check," Belanger says with a chuckle, "I asked for that particular room." ☺

—Mike Hall

The key to overcoming workers' fears of being fired or harassed for standing up for their rights is building trust, confidence and relationships, Belanger says. "You just can't go in and say 'sign this card, join the union.'"

into private meetings with managers—and fired. Then the bosses came for Belanger.

"They wiped out the whole night crew," Belanger says. So at 3 a.m., the newly married father-to-be found himself "letting off steam" in a quick and angry two-mile walk to meet UFCW Local 1445 organizer Jim Reilly at the Yankee Drummer motel.

"I was incensed and enraged that night. I was naive enough to believe the NLRA

Can't Beat the Blues

When the B.B. King Blues Festival rolled into Boston Mills ski resort near Cleveland on Aug. 22, it was a big day for blues fans to hear the legendary King—and Lucille, his guitar companion for more than 50 years. It was also a great opportunity for working families: The event was

one of 11 shows on King's 1999 summer and fall tour held in conjunction with the Communications Workers and the city's Jobs with Justice campaign.

In Cleveland, JwJ bought a block of 1,000 tickets to the 6,000-seat site. JwJ

worked with the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor, local unions and community groups to offer the tickets to working families—minus the typical \$4 or \$5 handling charge ticket agencies levy. Part of the proceeds went to JwJ.



BE SMART K-MART-RESPECT WORKERS' RIGHTS!

The show also gave JwJ a chance to get out its working families message.

"We were able to reach out to a general audience and talk to them about what JwJ and unions are doing, like the living wage campaign, the Workers' Rights Board and freedom to choose a voice at work," says Steve Cagan, Cleveland JwJ coordinator.

Members of the Musicians Union performed on a stage near the union booths before the show, and several unions planted their flags and banners on the lawn surrounding the amphitheater. ☐

Respect Workers' Rights."

By now, nearly 2 million potential shoppers have seen the union's 130-foot-long, five-foot-tall banner flying over major Detroit-area public events.

This year, workers at Kmart warehouses in Warren, Ohio, and Morrisville, Pa., voted to join the UAW, but the retailing giant refuses to negotiate, the union says. Kmart has a history of refusing to recognize workers' freedom to choose a union—workers at a Kmart distribution center in Ohio who voted for the Teamsters in 1992 still don't have a contract, and UNITE fought for three years to get a first contract for Kmart workers in Greensboro, N.C.

The banner has flown over boat races on the Detroit River; at the city's June 30 Freedom Fest, which drew an estimated 1 million people; and in view of an international crowd of several hundred thousand at the

Get Smart Kmart: Nearly 2 million potential Kmart shoppers have seen the UAW's message asking Kmart to respect workers' rights.

Detroit Grand Prix in August.

At the same time, union members have backed stockholder resolutions to make the retailer's directors more accountable, and in June some 500 workers rallied outside a Brooklyn, Ohio, Kmart, urging the company to "negotiate now." The UAW is distributing through its *Solidarity* magazine and at plant gates, Detroit Tigers games and other city events tens of thousands of pledge cards demanding Kmart respect workers' choice. ☐

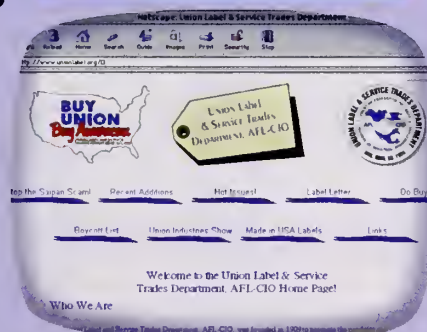
UNION LINE

UNION-MADE ANSWERS ONLINE

America's working families understand how important it is that consumers look for the union label and the Made in USA label. At a store, it's easy to check labels, but when shopping by catalog or the Internet, it's often impossible to determine who made a product and its country of origin.

The Internet offers several websites with a variety of information on union-made and American-made products.

www.unionlabel.org—One of the most extensive sites for finding union-made products is sponsored by the AFL-CIO Union Label and Service Trades Department. Visitors can search the department's database for thousands of union-made products and services.



www.uaw.org—This site by UAW features products made by its members. Among the items visitors can look up are bicycles, toys, musical instruments, cosmetics, sports gear, publications, appliances, medical items, automobiles and trucks, automotive parts and batteries, beer, food, lawn care and home repair products, tools, office supplies and factory-built homes.

www.hereunion.org/hotelguide—The Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees provide a guide to unionized hotels in the United States, Canada and U.S. territories.

www.uniteunion.org/unionlabel/promo.html—UNITE's website gives visitors a list of apparel and supplies made by its members, listing companies' names and addresses.

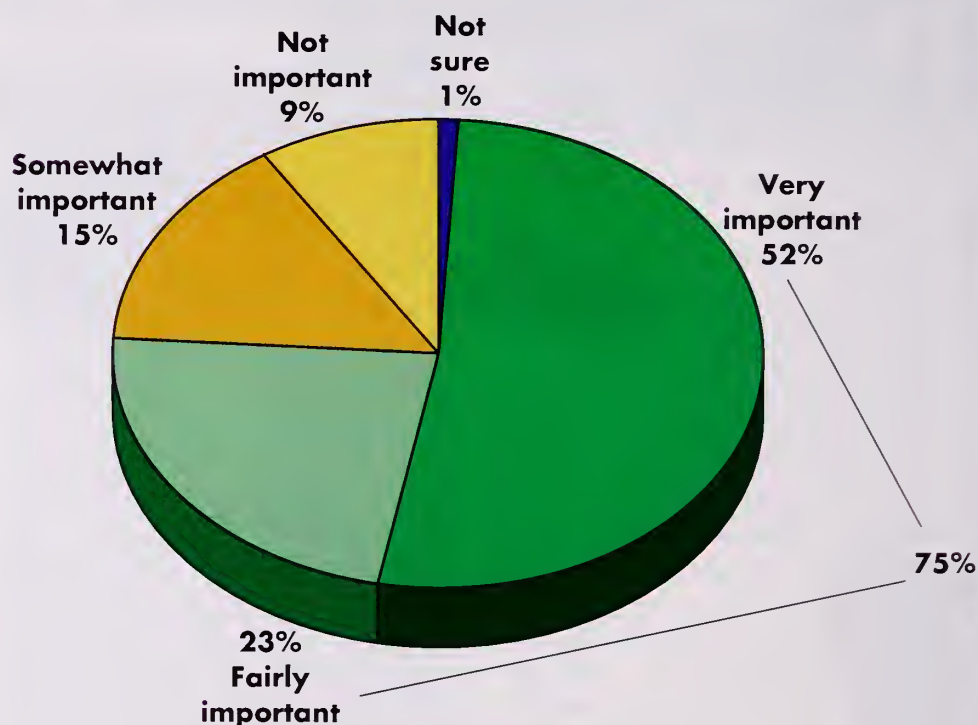
Know any other good sites? Contact Arlee Green; phone: 202-637-5114; e-mail: agreen@afclcio.org. ☐

FREEDOM TO CHOOSE A VOICE AT WORK

While the public overwhelmingly supports workers' right to form a union, most people—including community and religious leaders—don't realize that employers force workers to attend mandatory, closed-door, anti-union meetings, line up supervisors to "persuade" employees one on one to oppose a union or otherwise intimidate workers. But when unions tell the public about employers' secret war against workers, most say they disapprove of anti-union campaigns.

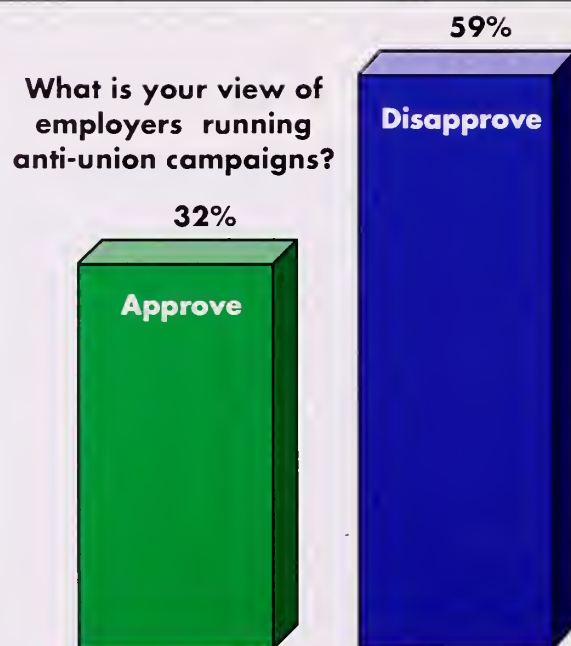
PUBLIC SUPPORTS WORKERS' RIGHT TO FORM UNIONS

How important is it to have strong laws giving workers the right to form and join unions?



Source: Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 1999

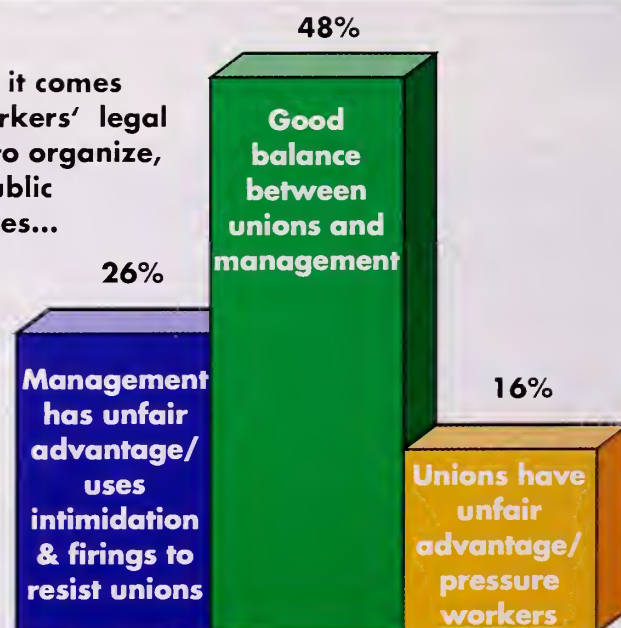
MAJORITY DISAPPROVES OF ANTI-UNION CAMPAIGNS



Source: Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 1999

BUT FEW RECOGNIZE MANAGEMENT'S UNFAIR ADVANTAGE

When it comes to workers' legal right to organize, the public believes...



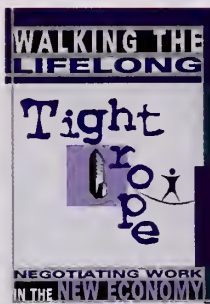
Source: Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 1999

PUBLICATIONS

Steelworker Alley: How Class Works in Youngstown, by Robert Bruno, takes a look at the way workplace bonds carry over to a community—in this case, Youngstown, Ohio. The history unfolds through profiles of former steel mill workers who experienced the industry's boom and bust years in the 1970s and 1980s. Bruno, an assistant professor in the Labor Education Program at the University of Illinois–Chicago, worked in the mills when he was younger and demonstrates a keen understanding of how the combination of dangerous work and repressive bosses strengthened the bonds of camaraderie. Those bonds were reinforced in the neighborhoods and through such union-sponsored activities as softball and golf leagues. The concentration of steelworkers along some streets in the city was so great those streets earned the nickname Steelworker Alley. Cornell University Press, 607-277-2211. \$45 cloth-bound and \$16.95 paperback.

The 9to5 Guide to Combating Sexual Harassment: Candid Advice from 9to5, the National Association of Working Women, by Ellen Bravo and Ellen Cassedy, is an updated and expanded version of the 1992 edition. The 216-page *9to5 Guide* speaks directly to union members and leaders about how to deal with sexual harassment, offering facts, strategies and real-life stories. The book details how workers can press management for action, educate their members and handle conflicts between members. It features model anti-discrimination contract language, up-to-date legal information and training exercises. Bravo is national co-director of 9to5 and Cassedy is a founder of the organization. \$15 plus \$3 for shipping and handling for the first book and 75 cents for each additional book. A 20 percent discount applies to orders of five or more books. To order, call 414-274-0925. All proceeds support 9to5.

Walking the Lifelong Tightrope: Negotiating Work in the New Economy, by Chris Benner, Bob Brownstein and Amy B. Dean, reports on how California workers are doing today and explains trends—including growing job insecurity



and increasing income inequality—that portend a bleak future for most of the state's workers. The report, which notes that 40 percent of the new jobs in the state over the next 10 years will require only a high school education or less and pay less than \$10 an hour, calls for a new social contract to guarantee prosperity is shared equitably. The framework of such a contract must seek to increase workers' earnings, reduce job insecurity, provide lifelong training and education and promote high-road economic development. Authors Benner and Brownstein are with Working Partnerships USA, a nonprofit foundation Dean started in 1995. Dean is the executive officer of the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council. The report is available for \$9 from Working Partnerships USA, 2102 Almaden Road, Suite 107, San Jose, Calif., 95125. For more information, call 408-269-7872 or e-mail: wpusa@atwork.org.

CONVENTION

The Coalition of Labor Union Women will hold its 10th biennial convention on Sept. 2–5, returning to Chicago, where its founding convention was held 25 years ago. The convention will include a session on Organizing for the 21st Century and CLUW's second Young Women Workers Forum. CLUW members will meet in conjunction with the Women's Conference of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement. For information, call 202-466-4610 or visit the CLUW website at www.cluw.org.

JOB HOTLINE

The U.S. Department of Labor recently set up a toll-free telephone number to help workers who have been laid off get access to federal, state and local job assistance programs. The number is available for workers in Georgia, Iowa, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Utah, Washington and Wisconsin. All 50 states are expected to phase in new forms of job assistance by the end of the year. Call: 877-US-2JOBS.

TELEVISION

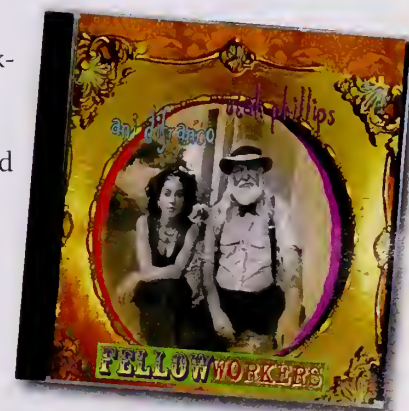
"Sing Faster: The Stagehands' Ring Cycle" takes a behind-the-scenes look at how the members of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 16 prepare the setting for the San Francisco Opera production of Richard Wagner's Ring Cycle, *Der Ring Des Nibelungen*. The hour-long documentary shows the stagehands operating the tricky, snapping jaws of a huge hydraulic dragon and wading through fog, smoke and darkness as they maneuver looming, 1,000-pound sets. The Jon Else film, which won the 1999 Sundance Filmmakers' Trophy, will be shown on PBS stations in October and November. Check local broadcast listings or the Independent Television Service website at www.itvs.org.



Stagehand Ken "Spike" Kirkland

MUSIC

Fellow Workers mixes music by folk-punk songstress Ani DiFranco and storytelling by the legendary Utah Phillips. The collaborative effort, which was recorded in a New Orleans mansion that has been converted into a recording studio, sounds like an impromptu jam session among friends. Phillips and DiFranco, both Musicians Local 1000 members, sing and tell of the struggles of coal miners and sweatshop workers as they seek to form unions and battle to end child labor. Among the most notable songs are the sometimes quirky and haunting renditions of union classics such as "Pie in the Sky" and "Bread and Roses." Suggested retail price: \$15.99. Righteous Babe Records, P.O. Box 95, Ellicott Station, Buffalo, N.Y., 14205; phone: 1-800-ONHEROWN.



Greg Kavanaugh

IBEW Local 400, City Council member,
Brick, N.J.



Melany Barnes

SEIU Local 513, Representative,
Kansas State Legislature



Whose Vote Do You Trust?

When your state legislature debates cutting workers' compensation or privatizing government services, which elected official do you trust—a country club lawyer or a union brother or sister?

A union member elected to public office understands the concerns of working families. To strengthen the voice of working families in our state and local governments, the AFL-CIO launched the **2000 in 2000 Initiative** to identify and recruit 2,000 union members to run for public office in the 1999–2000 election cycle.

2000 in

Today, the AFL-CIO has identified more than 1,500 union members who hold public office and are putting their experiences to work for working families. **On Oct. 13–14, in conjunction with the Twenty-Third AFL-CIO Constitutional Convention in Los Angeles, union members who are public officials will take part in the federation's Third Annual Conference for Union Members Holding Public Office.**

The conference will give union member-officeholders the chance to:

- Share experiences in shaping pro-working family policies.
- Exchange successful campaign strategies.
- Encourage other union members to run for office.

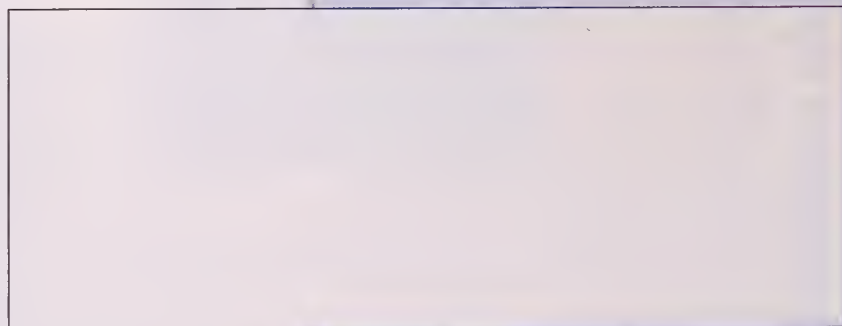
Anthony "Tony" Hill

Longshoremen Local 1408,
Representative, Florida
State Legislature



For information on union member-officeholders in your area, or for more information about **2000 in 2000**, contact Liz Rochlen of the AFL-CIO Political Department at 202-639-6277; e-mail: 2000in2000@afcio.org.

Urge your union members who hold public office to attend. Ask them to call the AFL-CIO toll-free at 1-888-3-AFL-CIO for registration information.



Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

OCTOBER 1999

America @work

Good Jobs Strong Communities

A Voice for Working Families

SPECIAL REPORT:
TWO YEARS OF PROGRESS FOR
WORKING FAMILIES

A New Day for WORKING FAMILIES

WITH MONUMENTAL EFFORT, UNIONS AND UNION MEMBERS ACROSS AMERICA have reinvigorated our movement and working families are beginning to see the benefits. This special issue of America@work looks at many of the tools the union movement has used since our last convention to provide working families a stronger voice on the job, in government, in the economy and in our communities.

This report tells the story of unions in every industry and region heeding the call to "organize for change, change to organize." It describes the work of activists at every level of union life to ensure that all working people have the freedom to choose a union, and that our unions reach deeply into our communities and reflect the faces of our diverse membership.

You'll read of union work to shape a global economy that responds to the needs of working families rather than bulldozing their dreams. And you'll find the strategies that are engaging working families in local, state and national politics and legislation and helping to make government work for all of us rather than the fortunate few.

This report also describes many ways in which unions are investing in the

future of working families—through training and education, promoting wise stewardship of workers' assets, helping create good jobs in strong communities and making sure that working families can share in the benefits of 21st century technology.

The stories in this special report testify to the incredible drive and commitment of today's union leaders and activist members. They paint a picture of what we can accomplish together. And I believe they demonstrate that our union movement has its eyes firmly on the prize and is moving, united and tirelessly, toward a new day for working families.

John J. Sweeney

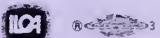


SHAUL SCHWARTZ/IMPACT VISUALS

When you see
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and our
members@work
and collective power
in our
communities@work,
that's when you see
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CONTENTS



8

4 CURRENTS

Prayers and parades: Celebrating Labor Day

10,000 US Airways workers join CWA

Take part in WTO meeting

Picking a winner at Stemlit apple warehouse

Holding lawmakers accountable

Stopping the hate



8



GOOD JOBS AND STRONG COMMUNITIES

8 Organizing for Change, Changing to Organize

11 Mapping the Road to Union Cities

14 Winning a Voice@Work

16 Working Women Working Together

18 Cultivating Vital Links to the Community

20



A NEW VOICE FOR WORKERS IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY

20 Recognizing the Universal Need for Workers to Have a Voice

22 Communicating Common Sense Economics

24 Investing in Working Families' Futures

26



BUILDING OUR FUTURE

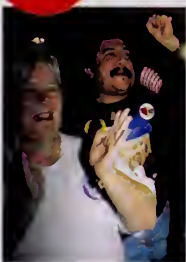
26 Educating and Training Workers for the 21st Century

28 Working for America

30 Wiring Working Families

31 Launching a Union Community Fund

32



MAKING GOVERNMENT WORK FOR WORKING FAMILIES

32 Fighting to Pass a Working Families Agenda

34 Mobilizing for Safe Jobs

37 Building to Win, Building to Last

Industrywide Strategy Leads to Home Care Contract

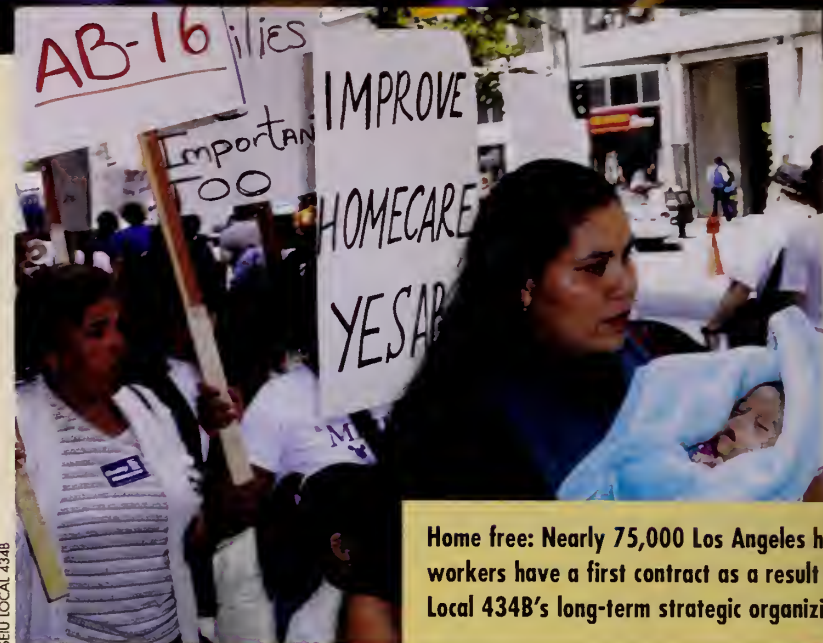
How do you organize tens of thousands of workers at nearly as many work-sites who have no common employer? That's what SEIU Local 434B faced when it set out to organize Los Angeles home care workers—a 12-year struggle that resulted in a first contract for some 74,000 members in August. The contract includes an 8.5 percent raise and the prospect of health care coverage and additional raises for the workers who, on average, earn \$5.75 an hour with no health or pension benefits.

Before Local 434B could sign up home care workers, the union first had to change state law so that workers who care for the home-bound elderly and people with disabilities would not be classi-

fied as “independent employees”—a designation that deprived them of the freedom to choose a union. Local 434B mobilized workers in a statewide organizing and legislative effort that in 1995 resulted in a law permitting counties to set up “public authorities” to serve as the workers’ employer, which Los Angeles County did in 1996.

“Our efforts to get politics involved paid off for us,” says Rickman Jackson, a lead organizer in the campaign who thinks the union’s strategy, which generated more than 5,000 calls and 20,000 letters to county officials, can work for other public-sector workers classified as “independent.”

Union leaders faced a new set of challenges when they began



Home free: Nearly 75,000 Los Angeles home care workers have a first contract as a result of Local 434B's long-term strategic organizing.

organizing workers. “Because we were never given lists of workers from the county or state, we had to rely on other means to find workers,” says Local 434B spokesman Jerry Vaughan. Emulating political campaigns, the union used precinct data to identify workers by area, ethnicity, assembly district and neighborhood. Home care workers voted by an 8-1 margin in February to join the union. ☐

Make Your Voice Heard at the WTO Meeting in Seattle

When trade ministers and heads of state from more than 130 countries gather in Seattle Nov. 30-Dec. 3 for the World Trade Organization's first-ever meeting in the United States, union and human rights activists will be marching, rallying and holding high-profile events to make sure workers are no longer left behind by the global economy.

Thousands of union, religious and environmental activists are planning massive mobilization actions to ensure WTO participants understand the need to link trade policies with the freedom to choose a union and other human rights.

“This meeting provides a cru-

cial opportunity to communicate with the WTO directly, as well as with our government, our views about the failures of the current trading system and the urgent need to incorporate enforceable workers’ rights into WTO rules,” says AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

Union activists are urged to take part in a conference of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, hosted by the AFL-CIO. The conference will be held in the week prior to the WTO meeting, and will provide an opportunity for elected union leaders from throughout the world to express solidarity

through a unified international union movement.

The WTO was established in 1995 to enforce international trade rules established by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. WTO decisions are



binding and can be enforced by withdrawing trade benefits from a country that has violated WTO rules.

To participate in any of the Seattle events or find out more, contact Joe Uehlein, project coordinator, at 202-637-5136, or e-mail: juehlein@afclcio.org. ☐

Picking a Winner

Low wages, inadequate access to health insurance and serious job safety problems are issues that transcend language barriers, as Teamsters organizers and workers learned during their recent campaign at the Stemlit apple processing and packing warehouse in Washington state. IBT organizers spent months making house calls, which in at least one instance included translating conversations between Spanish- and Polish-speaking warehouse workers.

“Clearly, these two women could not communicate very well verbally with each other, yet they were bonded by shared experience,” recalls organizer Paula Macchello. The house calls bore fruit: Last month, a majority of the more than 600 workers at the facility signed cards saying they want a voice at work, and an administrative law judge certified the results.

The opportunity to hold a streamlined card-check campaign was the result of an agreement between IBT and the company after workers brought their concerns to the National Labor Relations Board about the employer intimidation and harassment they suffered during an organizing drive last year. ☐

10,000 US AIRWAYS WORKERS JOIN CWA

Reaffirming their 1997 vote to join the Communications Workers (which was overruled by a federal court on legal technicalities in May), US Airways passenger and gate agents voted 2-to-1 for CWA in August.

In a bigger margin than the original vote, 67 percent of eligible workers voted for the union. Employees who were on the job as of April 1996 were eligible to vote. The bargaining unit at the airline includes

more than 10,000 workers.

"It was clear from the start that passenger service employees would again choose representation," CWA President Morton Bahr says. "Agents have sent management a clear message: They want representation and a contract."

The agents had not had a raise in seven years and suffered reduced benefits. The union and the airline were near a contract agreement in May, but US Airways halted talks after the court made its ruling. With the upcoming re-run election, US Airways raised pay and benefits—with no effect on the workers' choice to join the union. ☐

Connected: Passenger and gate agents at US Airways worked the phones before a successful second vote for CWA.



Holding Lawmakers ACCOUNTABLE

Massachusetts state Rep. John Slattery is among dozens of state lawmakers to take the Freedom to Choose a Union Pledge, part of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO's campaign to hold lawmakers accountable.

"We've got a booming prosperity here in the commonwealth, but the working men and women who put in long hours day in and day out aren't sharing in it," Slattery says. "The best way to make sure they get their fair share is to have a voice on the job and the best way to have a voice is with a union."

The state federation sent the pledge to all state house and senate members—and so far, about half of the legislature has signed

on. The pledge commits lawmakers to fully support workers' free choice to form a union without interference, intimidation or fear of reprisal and to urge employers to remain neutral, respect the choices of their workers and voluntarily recognize a union when a majority indicates the desire to form one.

The pledge "is a useful tool to organizers for identifying influential supporters and calling on them for help on the front lines," says state AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer Kathleen Casavant.

The state federation's newsletter keeps track of those who sign and urges readers to lobby their lawmakers who have not agreed to support workers' rights. ☐



Prayers and Parades: Celebrating Labor Day

More than half a million union members mobilized for Labor Day actions that included rallies, prayer services and parades to honor the efforts of workers and to recognize their struggles to gain a voice in their workplaces, communities and government. In one of thousands of events across the country, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney joined Building and Construction Trades President Robert Georgine, AFT President Sandra Feldman and President Clinton at an elementary school in Norfolk, Va., to discuss the need to rebuild our nation's schools.

"To be blunt, our schools are crumbling and it is a national disgrace," Sweeney said, reiterating working families' support for pending bills in Congress that would help repair and modernize local schools.

On Sept. 1, Sweeney kicked off Labor Day with 60,000 union members in New York City for a march that followed an interfaith breakfast, where six immigrant workers told their stories of struggling to form unions in the face of employer opposition.

In California, more than 4,500 union members and their supporters turned out for a Labor Day rally at the Oakland football and baseball stadium hosted by the Alameda County AFL-CIO. In Charlotte, N.C., giant pickle puppets joined in the city's first-ever Labor Day parade to draw attention to the plight of migrant farm workers and the effort by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee to convince

the South's largest pickle producer, Mount Olive Pickle Company, to recognize the union. More than 10,000 workers turned out for Labor Day events in Paducah, Ky., and 100,000 took part in events in Detroit that included interfaith services with Vice President Al Gore and Sweeney.

Over Labor Day weekend, union members and workers in more than 500 religious congregations from Los Angeles to New Haven,



Mobilizing: The 60,000 union members and their supporters who took part in a Sept. 1 march and rally in New York City are among more than half a million workers who joined in Labor Day celebrations nationwide.

Conn., took part in the Labor in the Pulpits program co-sponsored by the AFL-CIO and the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. Labor in the Pulpits events, which grew from 300 events in congregations in 37 cities last year, link the common bonds between unions and religious groups in their struggles for social and economic justice, equality, fair treatment in the workplace and human dignity. ☐

STOPPING THE HATE

Letter Carrier Joseph Ito was gunned down in Los Angeles because he looked Hispanic or Asian and worked for the federal government, according to statements Buford Furrow, the white supremacist charged with Ito's murder, made to police.

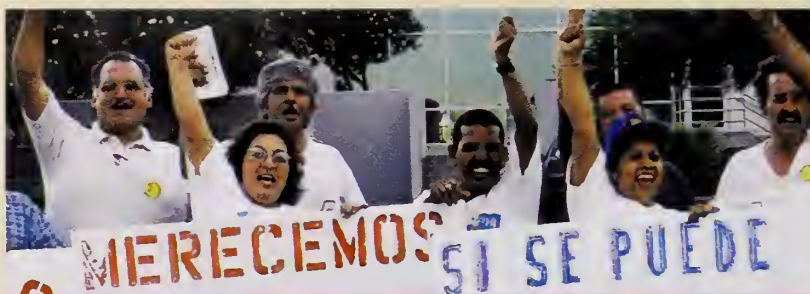
In August, members of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance joined with other Asian American advocacy organizations, civil rights and religious groups in Days of National Remembrance to honor Ito, a Filipino American, and four other Asian Pacific Americans murdered in hate-motivated attacks over the past year. "The atmosphere of intolerance—which has been advanced by English-only legislation and by measures which are anti-immigrant and anti-affirmative action—fuels the fires of hate, and explodes in tragedies like the Los Angeles shooting," says AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

At services in Los Angeles,

New York City, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, D.C., participants urged congressional passage of the 1999 Hate Crimes Prevention Act and called for an end to the spiraling number of hate crimes motivated by bias against a person's race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, disability or status as a government employee.

"Hate crimes are the embodiment of intolerance and bigotry. They divide communities and engender a climate of fear and mistrust," says APALA President Guy Fujimura.

The proposed law would broaden the federal government's ability to investigate and prosecute hate crimes. "The passage of the HCPA will send a strong message that hate-motivated crimes will not be tolerated," Fujimura says. ☐



Si Se Puede: Labor Council and state federation support bolstered the efforts of 800 Arizona furniture workers to join Carpenters Local 408.

CLCs and State Federations Mobilize to Organize

As employees explore joining together in a union, central labor councils and state federations often provide critical support.

Members of the Kenosha (Wis.) AFL-CIO's organizing committee and Teamsters Local 43, have been helping workers organize at Delux Video warehouse workers in Wisconsin. Twenty volunteers from unions, including Food and Commercial Workers Local 1444, SEIU Local 150, UAW 72 and Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees spent several days talking to Delux workers in their homes as part of a house-call blitz.

"Talking to nonunion workers was a real eye-opener," says member-organizer Greg Stark of UAW Local 72. "I did not realize how serious the issue of job security is for nonunion workers."

The AFL-CIO Field Mobilization staff helped by leading a training session on house-call basics.

In Arizona, the Central Arizona Labor Council and state federation helped out with an organizing victory in August at the Samuel Lawrence Furniture Manufacturing Plant in Phoenix. More than 800 Latino workers voted to join Carpenters Local 408 after the CLC and state federation fought the company's last minute anti-union actions, including the hiring of Spanish-speaking unionbusters from a Texas law firm. As part of the successful campaign, the CLC arranged for a public service announcement with UBC organizers at Radio Campesina, owned and operated by the Farm Workers.

And the Montana State AFL-CIO recently helped out HERE Local 427 during an organizing campaign at Grouse Mountain Lodge in Kalispell. The state federation contacted affiliate unions and political allies, encouraging them to cancel events scheduled at the lodge. The boycott bolstered the campaign and also enabled employees at the nearby Outlaw Hotel to win their struggle for a union. ☐

Over: The Rainbow Room Strike

For eight months, employees of the ritzy Rainbow Room in midtown Manhattan braved unemployment, replacement workers, libel suits and outrageous actions by their new employer to keep their union jobs. But their solidarity and courage paid off in September when Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 6 reached agreement with the Cipriani organization, which had replaced the union workers after it took over operation of

the restaurant in January. The new, six-year agreement allows the 250 workers to regain their jobs, keep union recognition and work under the contract they had before the walkout, and requires the Rainbow Room to replace current workers with displaced members of Local 6 based on seniority.

HERE's campaign drew communitywide support, including the refusal of 108 elected officials to cross the picket lines to attend events at

any Cipriani restaurants. Supporters included the late John F. Kennedy Jr. and Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan (D-N.Y.), as well as actors Leonardo DiCaprio, Gwyneth Paltrow and Rosie O'Donnell, according to the union.

The real heroes were the people of

New York City, says Local 6 spokesman John Turchiano. "There are a lot of anonymous

heroes—people we don't know who supported the Rainbow workers. All summer, the Cipriani properties were practically empty—and that's what helped us win." ☐



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Star support: Actor Leonardo DiCaprio was one of many reporters who honored workers' eight-month effort to their jobs at New York City's Rainbow Room restaurant.

Burmese Labor Leader Praises U.S. Union Support

Despite an economy fueled by forced labor and a regime that jails its opposition, Burma's workers keep the flame of trade unionism alive.

The American union movement has supported the Federation of Trade Unions—Burma “in many ways not seen that are essential to our survival,” Secretary Maung Maung said during a Washington, D.C., meeting with AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka. Maung Maung cited numerous examples: AFT helping teachers and democracy activists by taking their case directly to the Burmese authorities; Bricklayers supporting FTUB and the coalition government in exile; PACE International Union pressuring American oil companies to stop building a pipeline constructed with forced labor while propping up the country's corrupt regime; Seafarers helping Burmese sailors stranded on a cargo ship.

Headquartered in Bangkok, Thailand, the FTUB is a major part of a coalition seeking to restore democracy to one of the world's most notorious violators of human rights (see February 1999 *America@work*). Backed by the AFL-CIO and the Solidarity Center, the FTUB trains and organizes workers and fosters the creation of small Burmese trade unions.

Central labor councils and state federations throughout this country have pressured localities to adopt some two dozen selective purchasing laws aimed at discouraging trade with Burma—actions supported by the AFL-CIO Executive Council in 1997, which urged unionists to help restore democracy and civilian rule in Burma. The AFL-CIO was instrumental in getting the International Labor Organization to castigate Burma and publicize its worker and human rights abuses, and currently helps to direct substantial resources to a project combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic afflicting many Burmese refugees. ☐

Exiled: Burmese students in refugee camps on the Thai border design postcards, distributed by AFT, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



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Dubrow Honored

President Clinton presented the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award for distinguished peacetime service, to Evy Dubrow, retired legislative director of UNITE and its predecessor, the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union. Clinton praised Dubrow, a lobbyist of more than 40 years, for “advocating a higher minimum wage, safer workplaces and better education for the children of working families.” A founder of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and Americans for Democratic Action, Dubrow has been a leader in pay equity, fair trade, family and medical leave, civil rights, universal health care and other issues vital to working families. ☐



THE WHITE HOUSE

AFGE's Anti-Privatization Campaign

AFGE has launched a grassroots campaign to urge Congress and the administration to freeze contracting-out of federal services and programs unless there is proof that privatization improves quality, accountability and efficiency.

According to the union's SWAMP (Stop Wasting America's Money on Privatization) campaign, the rush to privatize has destroyed jobs and resulted in huge cost overruns and poor performance by contractors—hurting the programs and services privatization advocates claim will be improved.

AFGE President Bobby Harnage says he is calling on the union's Swamp Busters to mobilize grassroots activists to help establish new rules that protect federal employees' jobs and hold contractors accountable.

At AFGE's recent Human Rights Training Conference in Washington, D.C., 500 local union leaders and shop stewards got a chance to hone their grassroots and political activist skills. The six-day event, which focused on civil rights, women's and disability issues, also included workshops on organizing, health and safety, contracting-out, communications and political action.

“Every worker needs to be an activist on a range of concerns,” explains Kitty Peddicord, director of AFGE's Women's Department.

For more information on the SWAMP campaign, visit the union's website at www.afge.org. ☐



RAY CROWELL/PAGE ONE

Leadership training: AFGE President Bobby Harnage leads a workshop at the union's recent Human Rights Training Conference.

ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

Changing to ORGANIZE

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

TWO YEARS AGO, RASHIDA KHERMOHAMED was an active member of the organizing committee at her workplace, the customer service department at Greyhound Lines in Chicago where, she says, "we didn't have a voice at work, we were at-will employees" with no job security and substandard benefits. Recognizing that Khermohamed had the leadership qualities and listening skills it takes to be a top-notch organizer, Teamsters Local 743 encouraged her to attend the Organizing Institute, the AFL-CIO training program for union members seeking to become organizers. At the three-day training program, Khermohamed was "impressed to see how people worked together and were trying to help people." After an internship with SEIU Local 74 in New York, she returned to Chicago as a full-time organizer with IBT, where she has helped 109 warehouse workers at Montgomery Ward and 49 clerical workers at Central States, a pension processing firm, gain a voice on the job. "As an organizer, you are given an opportunity to use your skills and your brain," she says. "I have four campaigns going on right now," she says with pride.

Changing to organize

In 1997, delegates to the AFL-CIO convention passed a resolution declaring that "Growth through organizing requires a massive shift of union resources, strategic planning, new skills and organizing talent and membership education and mobilization." Khermohamed and hundreds more like her in every industry and every region of the nation are examples of how unions have embraced organizing. Affiliates have put into action "organizing for change, changing to organize" by dedicating more money to organizing, recruit-

ing and training leaders and getting members involved in bringing a voice on the job to their co-workers. The swelling ranks of the union movement translate into strength at the ballot box, as unions educate and mobilize increasing numbers of working families on issues most critical to them. And as more workers become union members, they help strengthen communities through the security and dignity that union wages and benefits bring.

Last summer, many unions and members solidified their dedication to organizing by shifting existing resources and raising new funds for organizing (see *America@work*, September 1998). At AFSCME's 1998 convention, delegates

Celebrating: Workers at Cannon plants in North Carolina celebrate a June 1999 vote in which 5,000 textile workers won a voice at work with UNITE.



ROBERT FOX/UNITE

approved per capita increases for organizing, establishing a cooperative, strategic campaign in which the international helps build full-time organizing capacity for district councils and locals that devote their own resources to organizing. Today, 20 AFSCME affiliates are taking part—and among those helping workers to have a voice on the job are Council 36, which organized 505 workers at the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and the Civil Service Employees Association in New York, which signed up 445 service and maintenance members at Long Beach Hospital and Nursing Home.

Steelworker delegates made a major financial commitment to organizing at their convention last year, and now each district is responsible for developing an organizing strategy and creating an organizing committee and training plan. The union has prepared new organizing manuals and videos and is bolstering its corporate and strategic research efforts. “We are trying to provide the services our rank and file need to be good organizers,” says USWA Secretary-Treasurer Leo Gerard, who led an organizing task force. Last year, the number of workers organized increased to nearly 20,000 (compared with 12,000 in 1997).

The UAW’s commitment to organizing was renewed more than a year ago when convention delegates created a new position of vice president in charge of organizing. Under the direction of UAW President Stephen Yokich and Vice Presi-



Success: As a result of a nationwide campaign, more than 19,000 ticket agents and cargo workers at United Airlines joined the IAM in 1998.

dent Bob King, UAW members across the country are volunteering time and energy to bring thousands of workers into their union. Auto parts and health care workers, graphic artists, university employees and casino workers are among those who recently have won UAW representation through card-check recognition or National Labor Relations Board elections.

At SEIU three years ago, 90 locals pledged to gradually increase the percentage of their budgets dedicated to organizing. Since then, 350 new local organizers have been hired to share with workers how they, their families and their communities would benefit if they had a voice on the job. That financial commitment has fueled SEIU’s growth.

Recruiting and training leaders

Because of the demand for well-trained organizers, participation in the Organizing Institute, established 10 years ago, has risen dramatically. Twice as many trainees are taking part in the program as last year, and an increasing number are union members. “We heavily rely on the Organizing Institute,” says AFSCME Organizing Director Jim Schmitz. “It is essential to test people’s ability to do this work and to learn from other unions.” He estimates that AFSCME has sponsored hundreds of union members’ training at the Organizing Institute in the past decade.

Affiliates deepen the Organizing Institute experience with their own tailored training programs. SEIU leaders began an Organizer in Training program after they sought to “open the doors to people who did not have a lot of organizing experience and give them the training,” says Pat Thomas, SEIU deputy organizing director. Two-day regional trainings augment on-the-job coaching. Mentoring and weeklong classroom training anchor SEIU’s staff enrichment program for senior organizers and new union organizing directors. Expanding recruiting and training has meant “we’ve been able to increase our pace on organizing, running more and bigger campaigns,” says Thomas. At USWA, the districts have increased the number of organizers trained from 30 to 400 a year. “We want to train 1,000 a year,” says Gerard. “We’re





PAUL RODRIGUEZ

Shifting resources: AFSCME affiliates, such as Council 36 in Los Angeles, are taking part in the international's efforts to build full-time organizing capacity at the local level.

seeding the farm. Training is an investment in the future."

Members who don't become full-time organizers can contribute as volunteers. "Unless our members believe strongly enough in the future of our union to devote their time, intelligence and spirit to its salvation," says the USWA organizing task force report, "we will never be able to captivate the imagination of nonunion workers." USWA districts have an aggressive program to train volunteer organizers, as do many other unions. For instance, after leaders at Operating Engineers Local 3 (which covers much of the West) trained member-volunteers, they created a 24-hour hot line for members to record organizing leads gleaned from visits to nonunion shops. If the tip leads to an organizing drive and gathers sufficient support to go to an election, the member is presented with a T-shirt emblazoned with "Organizer." If the drive leads to a vote and a contract, the member gets a bonus totaling one week of union dues paid per new member organized. Recently, the local won a unit of 640 nurses at a Reno, Nev., hospital. Should the nurses win a contract, the two members who originally phoned in the tip will split the prize, and could have years worth of union dues paid on their behalf.

Rounding out organizing training is the AFL-CIO Union Summer program, in which union members and college students spend a month learning about organizing firsthand by participating in an ongoing campaign. Since its inception in 1996, more than 1,700 interns have taken part in campaigns across the country, talking with strawberry workers in Watsonville, Calif., joining in a multiunion drive to bring dignity to public employees in Puerto Rico and signing up health care workers with AFT in Philadelphia. The graduates often go on to organize for social justice on their campuses and in their unions and communities.

Focusing on winning strategies

During the past several years, more unions created strategies to build strength in industries in which their members are concentrated. For example, members of the Communications Workers employed by telephone companies realized

that, with the advent of deregulation and new wireless technology, many employers have opened up nonunion subsidiaries and started moving work there.

Union leaders and activists mobilized to analyze industry trends, educate members about the need to organize and strategically target subsidiaries, including those bought by telecommunications giant AT&T. "AT&T workers were pioneers in building CWA," the union's executive vice president and organizing director, Larry Cohen, told delegates to CWA's recent convention. "Now, workers at AT&T subsidiaries are new pioneers, fighting for a voice against a company that has been seeking to transform itself into a nonunion organization."

In bargaining contracts with employers, CWA and other unions such as the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees negotiate card-check neutrality agreements for any future subsidiaries, which means the company won't interfere with workers' choice and will consent to a streamlined election process. This forward-looking "bargaining to organize" strategy, used by 20 CWA locals nationwide, has resulted in 3,000 more workers gaining a voice on the job in the past year. This summer, 120 workers at AT&T Wireless in West Palm Beach, Fla., and 117 workers at AT&T Local Service (formerly TCG) in Mesa, Ariz., became the newest members of CWA thanks to the "bargaining to organize" approach, Cohen says.

More and more unions also are focusing their efforts on building strength in specific geographic areas so union members can create a critical mass and enlarge their strength in the workplace and at the ballot box. For instance, a coalition of unions and central labor councils created Seattle Union Now to coordinate efforts to reach out to workers. "When you have strong unions working together in an area, it provides the infrastructure to support smaller unions," says Jonathan Rosenblum, director and lead organizer for SUN. "When unions are strong enough, it strengthens each of us, because employers know they can't get away with the worst aspects of union-busting." ☐



MICHAEL SACCO/BEV

On the front lines: Rashida Kherrmohamed, an organizer for Teamsters Local 743 in Chicago, is one of hundreds of union members to take part in the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute.

MAPPING the Road to UNION CITIES

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, MORE THAN 84,000 workers have joined unions in the Los Angeles area. A union recognition agreement covers a new downtown sports arena, and at least seven campaigns are under way in L.A. County with the potential to organize 12,000 workers. One, by the Food and Commercial Workers, involves 200 employees at a new Gigante supermarket—a firm that is unionized in its home base, Mexico, and is opening nonunion stores in southern California. Some 350 workers employed by contractor Swinerton and Walberg and their subcontractors are organizing as part of a multiunion building trades campaign. And as a result of a union and community campaign, both the city and the county have enacted laws requiring firms receiving government contracts to pay employees a living wage.



MICHAEL SACCO/BEW

Faithful partnership: Kim Bobo, director of the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, and New York State Labor-Religion Coalition Coordinator Brian O'Shaughnessy join Union Cities conference participants in a July 1998 rally to support Chicagoland Television employees seeking union recognition with AFTRA.

At the same time, the state legislature and city council have welcomed a growing majority of newly elected officials who have put workers' freedom to choose a voice on the job at the top of their agendas. The Los Angeles County Federation of Labor helped these candidates win by deploying a newly enlarged volunteer base and focusing on the message rather than the candidate.

In 1997, the AFL-CIO laid out a map for central labor councils on the road to becoming "Union Cities"—communities where families want to work, live and raise their children, and where workers make living wages, get decent benefits and have time to spend with their kids. A place where elected officials take seriously workers' freedom to choose a voice at work and where employers respect workers and the jobs they do. The Union Cities campaign, an eight-step strategic plan, builds strength for working families by explicitly linking organizing, political action and community coalition building as the vital components necessary to accelerate the momentum in favor of justice for working families.

A little more than two years later, 157 central labor councils are on the road to Union Cities, including the L.A. County

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Federation, which shifted resources to support affiliate organizing, focused its activities on affiliates' priorities and strategic planning and formed leadership committees to rank priorities and carry out programs. "We knew we had to change the culture of unionism in Los Angeles to build a communitywide support that would, in turn, build the union movement," says Miguel Contreras, executive secretary-treasurer of the federation. "We used the Union Cities campaign to help us do that."

Here's a sample of what central labor councils in other parts of the country have accomplished:

Building political power

Through the Union Cities mobilization structure, Street Heat, the Quad City, Illinois and Iowa Federation of Labor began using phone trees, faxes and a 950-person mailing list to increase members' political activism two years ago. During the 1998 elections, union leaders designed targeted leaflet drops and precinct walks to members' homes. "It is great to walk into a union hall on a Saturday morning at 8 a.m., in the rain, and see over 100 union members ready to walk precincts," says Jerry Messer, president of the council. "When people know what the issues are, they mobilize," he says. The political mobilization yielded solid victories: Several union leaders



were elected to the board of supervisors; a local AFSCME president, Lou Ann Kerr, upset an 18-year incumbent for county treasurer; and Rep. Lane Evans (D-Ill.) won a tough re-election campaign—one widely acknowledged as dependent on union votes. It also built a permanent mobilization structure and energized members who've come out time and again for rallies to support workers negotiating their first contracts and those on strike. "Involving our members means people are now used to mobi-

lizing," Messer says.

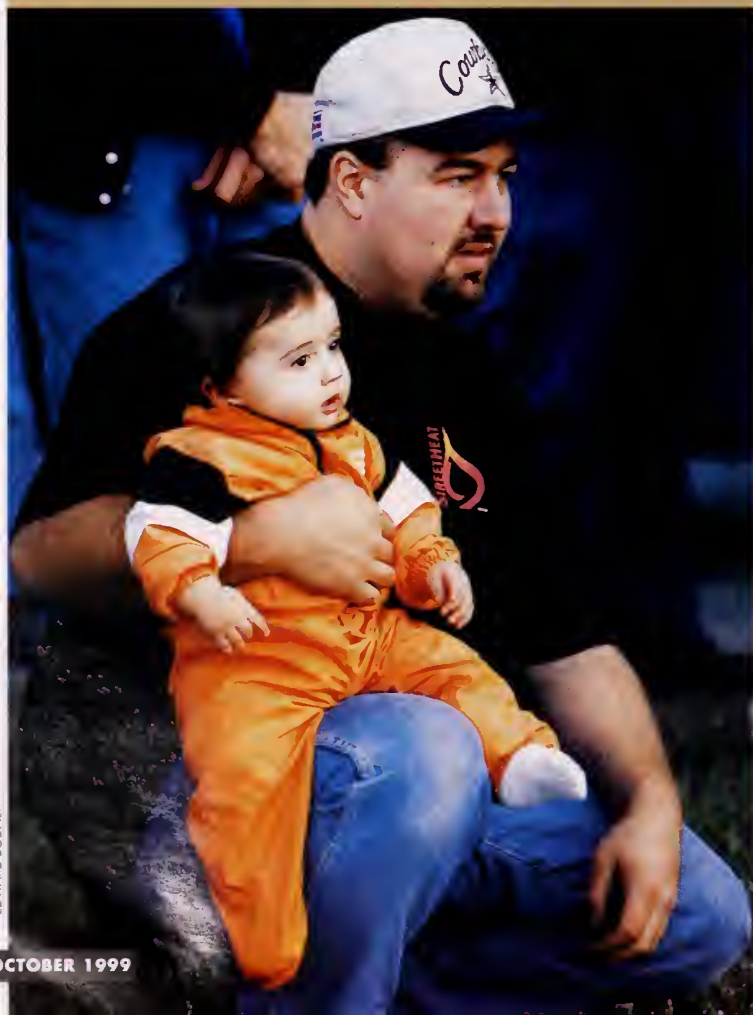
Organizing new members

A strong and active central labor council made a critical contribution to the organizing victory among drivers at Laidlaw Bus Co. in Cincinnati last year. The Cincinnati AFL-CIO Labor Council had cultivated relationships with elected officials and community groups such as the NAACP and the A. Philip Randolph Institute over several years, so it was in a strong position to be helpful when Amalgamated Transit Union Local 627 sought support for its campaign. "We wanted to give the workers the confidence of knowing they weren't alone," says Dan Radford, the council's executive secretary-treasurer. Through the CLC, school teachers got involved by writing a joint letter to the school board asking it to urge Laidlaw to let workers have a fair election. In addition, hundreds of union bus drivers wrote letters and showed up at rallies to talk with the workers. And on Feb. 27, 1998, the 350 workers won union representation.

Coming together in community coalitions

When leaders of the South Florida AFL-CIO in Miami began a living wage campaign, they knew they could win only with the combined power of the entire community. So they reached out to the Human Services Coalition, which represents social service agencies that were facing budget cuts. "We helped them with their issue and they helped with ours," says Mike Ozegovich, executive director of the labor council. As part of a strategic coalition-building campaign, Miami union leaders worked with prominent civil rights activists and ministers who later mobilized the African American community in support of the living wage ordinance. The union-community coalition generated 1,000 phone calls to the mayor's office and galvanized 900 people to gather at City Hall the day of the vote. "The county commissioners never saw anything like that before," Ozegovich says. "They weren't going to fight that kind of wave. They saw the power of the coalition." The ensuing 12-0 vote in May raised wages for workers on city contracts to \$8.56 an hour plus health benefits. Ozegovich acknowledges that coalition-building is hard work, but it is work that yields short- and long-term

Road map: Union Cities are communities where working families want to live, work and raise their children.



EDWARD BOONER



EDWARD BODNER

Street Heat: The Union Cities strategy involves mobilizing workers through Street Heat actions, such as this November 1998 rally in Nashville, Tenn., in support of 1,240 UAW workers who were locked out at Peterbilt Motors.

results. "You can't do Street Heat from your office," he says, referring to the Union Cities mobilization strategy for rallies and demonstrations. "You've got to go to the meetings and go to the religious organizations. You've got to let them know that you are there for them."

Along with many such examples of the success of Union Cities, new statistical evidence shows how well the program is working. Philip McLewin, economics professor at Ramapo College of New Jersey, studied the Union Cities initiative and found that 90 percent of Union Cities CLCs mobilized members monthly last year, compared with only 55 percent of those that have not yet joined. Overall, 60 percent of Union Cities CLCs participate in core activities of the eight-part program—organizing, mobilizing, building political power and community building—in contrast with the 40 percent typical participation rate of those not enrolled. Union Cities labor councils are more than twice as

Living wage: Fighting for a living wage in the community is a key Union Cities strategy. In San Jose, a union-community effort resulted in the 1998 passage of a \$9.50-an-hour wage with benefits for employees of city contractors.



likely to maintain activist databases as other councils. "Union Cities are far more engaged in advancing the mission of the AFL-CIO," McLewin concludes.

Through Union Cities, workers rallied for the freedom to join a union at more than 120 Voice@Work actions in June (see page 14), and hundreds of union members and religious leaders took part in more than 500 Labor in the Pulpits events over Labor Day to deliver messages on the need for dignity, respect and justice in the workplace and the freedom of workers to join a union.

Union Cities labor councils are going beyond their goal of building strength locally and are beginning to pool their efforts to pursue national victories. For instance, through letters and meetings generated by more than 100 CLCs nationwide, UNITE and the Cincinnati-based uniform maker Fechheimer, which has plants in five states, agreed to restore the company to 100 percent union status. The company stopped subcontracting work to nonunion shops and said it would stay neutral during organizing campaigns at its nonunion facilities.

The next step for one Union City, Los Angeles, is to strengthen alliances with community groups, flesh out affiliates' strategies to step up organizing and continue moving resources to organizing. "Our affiliates want us to figure out the best ways to assist them with organizing," Contreras says. "We could not have done this five years ago. We would have been seen as an island. Now, we are seen as mainstream. We're not only going to survive, we're going to flourish." @

8 STEPS TO UNION CITIES

The road to Union City takes eight steps:

- 1.** Changing to organize by devoting more resources to organizing, devising and implementing a strategic organizing plan and mobilizing the local's entire membership around organizing.
- 2.** Mobilizing against employers fighting employees' efforts to join unions.
- 3.** Building community coalitions and political power.
- 4.** Promoting economic growth and protecting communities.
- 5.** Educating union members about economic issues that affect working families' paychecks.
- 6.** Generating support for workers' freedom to choose a voice on the job.
- 7.** Increasing the diversity of union leadership.
- 8.** Increasing union membership 3 percent annually by 2000. @

Winning a VOICE@WORK

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BY LAUREN LAZAROVICI

ONLY DAYS AFTER A DELEGATION OF 45 WORKERS and community leaders stopped by to meet with the workers at Union Tank Car in Houston, the workers voted to have a voice at work by joining the Steelworkers. The Justice Bus Tour, with its stop at Union Tank Car, was part of 1998's June 24 "Day to Make Our Voices Heard," a nationwide effort by the unions of the AFL-CIO to draw attention to the struggles of workers to organize.

One year later, during *7 Days in June*, the Union Tank Car workers won their first contract—assisted in large part by the union–community coalition that kept a spotlight on their struggle. Activists from the Harris Central Labor Council included Union Tank Car on its *7 Days in June* Justice Bus tour this year, holding a celebration complete with a "Justice for Workers" award to the company. Among those taking part was the district director of the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which since has joined with union and community leaders to form a task force on low-wage immigrant workers. "We've really made the connection with the immigrant rights community," says Richard Shaw, president of the labor council. "That's important in terms of

the workers we need to help organize—it's a group that literally has no voice at work."

Creating a climate for organizing

With *7 Days in June*, the AFL-CIO launched its Voice@Work campaign, aimed at ensuring all workers have the freedom to choose a union. The ongoing campaign enables unions to increase their potential to mobilize and organize by building community understanding and support for workers' issues—helping workers organize into unions from stronger positions. The June events nearly doubled the 70 actions held in 1998—which were highlighted by the success of Food and Commercial Workers Local 400 in winning a first contract for poultry workers in Laurel, Md.—to 120 in 1999, when 15,000 people spoke out about facing employer harassment, both subtle and blatant, because they chose to join a union.

The Voice@Work campaign helps create a climate for organizing by demonstrating that thousands of working Americans want union representation and are fighting to get it. According to public opinion research, 69 percent of those surveyed in 1999 overwhelmingly acknowledge that unions give employees a voice at work. Three out of four people polled support

strong laws giving workers the right to join and form unions, according to Peter D. Hart Research Associates. However, the public does not realize management often uses such unfair tactics as intimidation, firings and captive audience meetings to resist unions. Only 26 percent of those polled say management has an unfair advantage and uses intimidation and firings to resist unions; even 30 percent of union family members are unaware of management's advantage.

Yet, in one out of three union campaigns, employers fire workers who are trying to form a union, according to research by Cornell



Front-line leadership: AFL-CIO Vice President Clayola Brown takes part in an August 1999 APRI rally supporting New Orleans workers' efforts to win a voice at work.



7 Days: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson took part in *7 Days in June* actions in Las Vegas this year, where she joined Teamsters and UFCW members at several rallies and marches.

CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson joined the Massachusetts Freedom Ride to Organize, stopping in Medford, where management at Whidden Hospital stalled negotiations after a majority of workers backed a union. "We want quality health care for our patients and ourselves, but we can't have that without a contract," said Whidden employee Ethel Sinatra during the Medford rally. Bus riders in Seattle, meanwhile, heard from the director of the We are the World child care center, who said, "I cry when

University Prof. Kate Bronfenbrenner. An astonishing 91 percent of employers force employees to attend anti-union meetings; 79 percent use supervisors to pressure workers in one-on-one meetings. Half of employers threaten to shut down or downsize operations in retaliation.

The good news, however, is that 59 percent of the public disapproves of anti-union campaigns and would favor such measures as giving unions equal access to employees (74 percent) and ensuring that supervisors can't influence a worker's vote (70 percent). But before they can be called upon to support workers' efforts to organize into unions, people need to hear the stories of workers who face these hurdles.

Making our voices heard

Seattle was one of several cities where union activists held Jobs with Justice Workers' Rights Board hearings as part of *7 Days in June* activities. There, activists capped a week of action with a hearing at which Filipino American community leaders outlined standards for employer behavior when workers try to join unions.

Elected officials also can be helpful in amplifying workers' voices in organizing struggles. During a *7 Days in June* "Profile in Rights Denied" forum sponsored by the New York City Central Labor Council, U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) expressed support for labor laws that protect the freedom of working men and women to join a union. After hearing Circular Express workers describe workplace conditions that included the lack of bathrooms, Schumer promised to help get inspectors to the company. In Ohio, Republican state Rep. Donald Mottley chaired a hearing in Columbus, where workers described how they fought to get a voice on the job. The Voice@Work campaign reminds elected officials that the higher standard of living these workers are struggling for can raise living standards for the greater community.

Like their brothers and sisters in Houston, union activists in many other cities revved up buses and vans during *7 Days in June* for tours to highlight workers' organizing campaigns. AFL-

I fill out the paychecks each week—they're so small." She said that despite her initial misgivings about employees joining a union, she now sees unions as the best way to improve working conditions and child care quality industrywide.

Mobilizing to organize

Workers celebrated victories as a result of *7 Days in June* activities, including the newest members of the United Union of Roofers and Waterproofers in California and Nevada who won their first contract victory when Willis Roofing, a subcontractor of homebuilder Kaufman and Broad, recognized their freedom to choose a union. Their agreement includes health coverage, wage hikes and nearly \$400,000 in back pay for the 250 mostly Latino workers who had not been paid overtime and who were required by their employer to pay for health and safety equipment. A planned rally turned into a victory celebration for SEIU District 1115 in New Jersey, where caregivers at Beachview Nursing Home signed a recognition agreement with the company and began bargaining 15 months after the workers voted to join the union.

Beyond immediate victories, the Voice@Work campaign is helping unions boost their ability to mobilize and organize. In Philadelphia, for instance, central labor council leaders put together four nights of organizing workshops for local unions. In Omaha, Neb., and Cheyenne, Wyo., union leaders began forging links to community groups, holding working sessions to discuss organizing and the freedom to choose a union.

The next step for the activists engaged in the Voice@Work campaign will involve educating congressional representatives on the hurdles workers face when they organize. Workers will meet one on one with members of Congress in their home districts to tell their stories. "We must create greater awareness of how unions improve peoples' lives and we must make injustice visible by exposing the secret war going on in our workplaces," says AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka. "Only by fighting together can we restore the voices of working families in our workplaces, our government and in the global economy." @

WORKING WOMEN Working TOGETHER

BY ARLEE C. GREEN

IN 1997, THE AFL-CIO WORKING WOMEN'S Department asked women nationwide about their jobs, their lives and their futures. More than 50,000 women answered the *Ask a Working Woman* survey and thousands more participated in roundtable discussions and telephone surveys. Their top concern? Equal pay, with 94 percent saying it was very important and one-third indicating they didn't have it. Other key issues include child care and such basic benefits as paid sick leave, health care coverage, pension plans and a safe and healthy workplace.

Their answers helped focus the department's mission and guide the federation's organizing and legislative initiatives over the next two years to put the full weight of the union movement behind women's efforts to make their voices heard.

Women are choosing to unionize in bigger numbers than ever before—and in far larger numbers than men. Women choosing a voice at work increasingly are coming from industries with a high percentage of working women, such as health care, retail and restaurants. But even though the percentage of female members in unions nearly doubled from 20 percent in 1960 to 39.4 percent in 1997, women remain underrepresented.

This year, following up on the 1997 survey, affiliate unions, state federations and central labor councils are hosting *Ask a Working Woman* roundtable discussions in scores of cities with such participants as First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and Vice President Al Gore. Unions are distributing a new *Ask a Working Woman* survey, asking women about their greatest concerns and legislative priorities.

The survey results will be released in March, when thousands of working women come together to create a mandate for the new century at the Working Women 2000 conference in Chicago. There, working women will talk about gaining a voice on the job and in the 2000 elections and set an agenda for change. Participants will take action guides back to their unions to strategize for the 2000 elections and beyond.

Working women vote

Working women are more likely to support candidates who support working families—which is why, over the past four years, the Working Women Vote campaign has involved thousands of women across the nation in rallies, distributing Working Women materials at candidates' forums and Labor Day events and meetings, luncheons and workshops to encourage women to exercise their right to vote.

As members mobilize for political action in Labor 2000, such local unions as SEIU District 1199E-DC in Baltimore, which was active in Working Women Vote in 1998, will be

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MARIANNE KEEFER ZWEIF/PAGE ONE

Joining together: Through *Ask a Working Woman* surveys, rallies and roundtables, women discussed their biggest concerns about their jobs, their lives and their families.

coordinating the front-line activities for Working Women Vote 2000. In 1998, "We had a nonpartisan, politician-free rally where guest speakers spoke on the issues important to women," says Armeta Dixon, District 1199E-DC executive secretary.

Equal pay, child care, Social Security and other key working family issues are what Working Women Vote is all about: A nonpartisan mobilization of working women to focus local and national campaign dialogues on issues working families care most about, and boost candidates willing to fight for legislation on these issues.

What working women care about

Nearly 40 years after equal pay legislation was passed, women still earn less than men—26 cents less on the dollar on average. But in the biggest series of actions since equal pay passed in 1963, state federations are moving strong equal pay legislation in 26 states—and have won victories in Illinois, Indiana, Oklahoma and New York.

In February 1998, the AFL-CIO and the Institute for Women's Policy Research released *Equal Pay for Working Families: National and State Data on the Pay Gap and its Costs*—a report that drew nationwide attention by highlighting how working families lose billions of dollars every year because of the pay gap. Whether in Wisconsin, where working women make 69 percent of men's wages, or in Arizona, where the wage gap is one of the lowest at 18 percent, working families in this country each lose an average of \$4,000 in income every year.

In 1998 and 1999, unions held Equal Pay Day events nationwide in April to underscore the day when women's pay from the previous year finally catches up to men's average pay. This year, the Indiana State AFL-CIO sponsored Equal Pay Day events, sending cosponsors of equal pay legislation PayDay candy bars, while the Illinois State Federation held its first-ever Women's Conference and participants lobbied house lawmakers—who voted 115-to-0 for equal pay legislation.

Organizing women here and abroad

Fifty-seven percent of women polled say they would vote for a union tomorrow, according to Peter D. Hart Research Associates. Women, more so than men, think union representation means better wages and benefits, increased job security, fair treatment and respect on the job.

Women currently make up about 40 percent of total union membership. In industries where women are the majority of the workforce, such as in the health care and the service sector, workers win union elections 60 percent of the time. Recognizing the importance of giving women a voice on



JAMES MCCOY/BUFFALO NEWS

Working together: Hillary Rodham Clinton joins working women at one of a series of town hall meetings hosted by state federations, labor councils and unions this year.

the job, dozens of unions and state federations have created departments, committees and training programs for women members and increased efforts to bargain for equal pay and working family issues. In 1998, the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers created a women's advisory committee, while the Steelworkers established

the post of assistant to the president for women's affairs. In the past year, dozens of state federations and central labor councils have held their first women's conferences.

What's true for women in this country is true around the world: Women are increasingly taking the lead in holding multinational corporations accountable. Through such forums as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the AFL-CIO is pressing for key international labor standards on equal pay and nondiscrimination in employment. Along with the Solidarity Center, the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department, federation affiliates and allied groups, the Working Women's Department is working to promote the understanding that the only way to achieve women's rights is by winning workers' rights.

Bargaining for working families

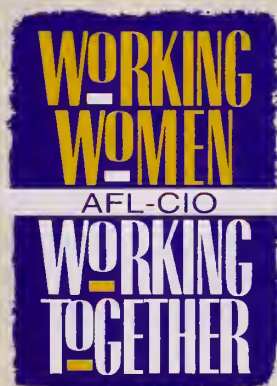
At the bargaining table, unions seek to narrow the pay gap by pressing for equal pay, seeking higher pay for employees in lower-paid classifications where there are a majority of women workers and minorities and winning higher pay through job reclassifications and comparability pay for female-dominated jobs.

In New York City, a union coalition mounted a "Child Care that Works Campaign" that achieved dependable, high-quality, affordable child care for more working families. The campaign led to a record increase in state child care funding, by \$342 million to \$622 million in 1999 and 2000. The UAW negotiated a \$6 million fund for 60,000 working families in Detroit.

Working women also are bargaining improvements in elder care, telecommuting, job sharing, voluntary overtime, shorter workweeks and voluntary reduced work schedules. For example, Electrical Workers Local 1245 won major benefits—medical, dental, vision coverage and more—for part-time employees at Pacific Gas & Electric in Walnut Creek, Calif.

Scores of state federations and central labor councils have adopted a Work and Family Bill of Rights that provides working families with a vehicle to fight for their rights, including affordable quality child care.

Through organizing, political and legislative action, successful bargaining and assistance to international labor groups, today's unions are fighting for solutions to crucial women's issues and enhancing the quality of life for working women and their families. @



Cultivating VITAL LINKS TO THE COMMUNITY

BY JAMES B. PARKS

AS THE UNION MOVEMENT REACHES OUT TO create stronger communities and enable all working people to have a voice on the job, the AFL-CIO constituency groups are expanding their long-standing efforts to build partnerships with grassroots movements and community groups and to ensure unions hear and respond to the concerns of the communities they represent.

Pride at Work, which in 1997 became the newest AFL-CIO constituency group, joins the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, A. Philip Randolph Institute, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Coalition of Labor Union Women and Labor Council for Latin American Advancement in representing specific groups of workers and their supporters.

Formed out of the rich traditions of the civil rights and union movements—each with a distinct history but similar goals—the constituency groups have fought discrimination and poverty, promoted new union leaders, built ties between unions and the community and provided a link for participation in unions and the political process.

Because their members represent the new workforce—which includes growing proportions of people of color and women—these groups are critical to rebuilding the union movement. They are becoming increasingly involved in every aspect of the federation's work, especially organizing, coalition building, mobilization and political action. The groups took a major step in that direction in September, when they adopted a joint agenda for 2000 that includes organizing, fighting discrimination, making women and minorities count, defending immigrant rights and strengthening Social Security. "The agenda shows how important these groups are to building the union movement," says Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson.

Community action

At the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), where workers are struggling for a voice on the job as part of a multiunion organizing and grassroots mobilization campaign, constituency groups are a vital link in the



Building partnerships: Members of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, led by APRI President Norman Hill (second from left), and Leon Lynch, AFL-CIO Vice-President (right), joined union and community members in New Orleans last August to support workers' freedom to join unions.

community effort to help the mainly African American, Latino and Asian Pacific American workers at LAX exercise their freedom to choose a union.

United L.A., a coalition of constituency groups formed two years ago with assistance from the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, mobilizes its members to speak out against injustices and draw attention to the LAX workers' plight, says Kathleen Yasuda, APALA's organizing director. Concerned about low-wage, low-bid subcontractors driving down pay and living standards at LAX, unions, constituency groups and community, religious, civil rights and grassroots organizations joined together in a coalition called Respect for LAX and won passage of a living wage law.

The coalition also is working to bring union benefits to thousands of LAX workers through a joint organizing campaign by SEIU Local 1877 and Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 814. When workers put together a "Justice Tour" of the airport last October to increase community awareness, APALA recruited Asian Pacific American leaders to join the tour. The local chapters of the CBTU and APRI shared the conditions LAX workers faced with local African American ministers, who then joined a religious coalition to support the organizing drive.

The LAX campaign demonstrates a commitment to working together, efforts reinforced through AFL-CIO-sponsored full

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participation conferences in 1995 and 1998, where representatives of all the constituency groups met to discuss a common agenda and ways to increase their role in federation activities. At the 1998 conference, delegates selected the right to choose a union and economic justice as key goals, and declared them the civil rights issues of the 21st century.

This past June, the groups met again during the AFL-CIO Civil and Human Rights Conference to develop strategies to build community coalitions to support workers seeking to choose unions. "You cannot organize in a vacuum," says William Lucy, AFSCME secretary-treasurer and president of CBTU. "We have to show people that there is a close connection between workers having a voice and the community's standard of living." Participants also mapped out plans to form coalitions around such issues important to working families as Social Security, and to build a political voice for women and people of color.

Constituency group members have strong ties in their communities, which facilitate organizing and coalition building, says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson. "We talk about empowering workers; the workers who need us most are women and people of color who have not gotten a voice, whether in politics or the workplace."

Making a difference

Through a wide range of initiatives, constituency groups are showing how they can benefit workers and their unions. LCLAA educates the union movement about the impact of the lax trade laws and the North American Free Trade Agreement on workers in the United States and Mexico, says Oscar Sanchez, the organization's executive director. By organizing visits to the homes of the maquila workers, LCLAA shows union officers and members "that the global economy is not about worker against worker, but workers fighting the companies that exploit us on both sides of the border," Sanchez says.

In 1998, APALA, APRI, CBTU, CLUW and LCLAA members worked tirelessly to get out the vote in working families' dramatic defeat of Proposition 226, California's "paycheck deception" act. "Because we are a bridge to the African American community, we were able to use our network of contacts and our ongoing presence in the community to explain the significance of 226 to black voters and then to get them out to vote," says APRI President Norman Hill.

Civil rights remains a high priority for the constituency groups as they work in close coalition with community allies. PAW, whose members include lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers and their supporters, is committed to educating union members about discrimination in the workplace because of sexual orientation and gender expression or identity, says Executive Director KipuKai Kuali'i. Each PAW chapter works with local union and community organizations to educate them about employment discrimination. "The only way we're going to be successful at ending discrimination is through coalition with other groups," Kuali'i says. Other civil



Links: The Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance is one of six AFL-CIO constituency groups that serve as a bridge for unions and their communities.

rights issues high on the agendas of the constituency groups include affirmative action, hate crimes legislation and immigrant rights.

Constituency groups also are changing the face of the union movement. The increase in the number of women and people of color on the AFL-CIO Executive Council reflects unions' efforts to increase diversity in leadership positions, says CLUW President Gloria Johnson of the Electronic Workers. Constituency groups are attempting to intensify the increase in diversity through leadership development training and workshops on issues, and by encouraging their members to participate fully in their unions. "Women and people of color are the fastest-growing groups of union members. If we want them to join us in larger

numbers, then we have to ensure that when they look at union leaders, they see someone who looks like them," Johnson says.

Looking ahead

Constituency groups and the AFL-CIO are working toward creating new synergy between the groups and the federation.

Increasingly, organizing is a key focus of constituency groups: APALA, CLUW and CBTU have hired new staff to concentrate on organizing and coalition building, and APRI recruited 38 African American union members and potential organizers for a three-day training session it co-sponsored with the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute in July.

The growing emphasis on organizing was clear during *7 Days in June* this year, when constituency group members joined tens of thousands of union members, community activists, pro-worker lawmakers and workers seeking to join unions in marches and rallies in 38 states and the District of Columbia to shine a spotlight on employers' secret war to block workers' freedom to choose a union.

APRI's chapter in Savannah, Ga., mobilized its members to participate and played a major role in promoting local *7 Days in June* actions. In Toledo, Ohio, CBTU helped organize a community forum and hearing where workers at St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center who are seeking UAW membership told of their employer's attempts to intimidate them through closed-door pressure meetings. CBTU joined the central labor council and community groups to successfully lobby the city council to pass a resolution calling on the hospital to respect the workers' right to choose a union.

It's clear that cooperation between local unions and constituency groups can help the union movement achieve its goal of enabling workers to choose a voice at work, says Chavez-Thompson.

"We plan to work with the local CLCs and state federations to show them that the constituency groups are great assets," she says. "They can mobilize and draw in new members. They're living and working in the community year-round. They can show that we're there for the community when it needs us and it'll be there when we need it." @

**A NEW Voice
for WORKERS
in a Global
ECONOMY**

RECOGNIZING THE UNIVERSAL NEED for Workers to Have a Voice

BY DAVID KAMERAS

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN WORKERS' QUEST FOR respect, safety and fairness on the job and employers' pursuit of higher profits is a struggle that affects workers everywhere. In the global economy, the absence of strong unions hurts workers worldwide.

When worker rights—freedom of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, abolition of child labor and forced labor and elimination of discrimination—are enforced and workers can join independent unions, workers are given the opportunity to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

The universal need for workers to have a voice, whether they make steel in Indiana or bricks in India, defines the mission of the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (Solidarity Center) and the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department. The international policies and programs are designed to strengthen international solidarity and ensure worker rights. All are key steps to fighting abuse of workers that, according to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, resulted in the 1998 murders of 123 trade unionists and attacks on 1,650 more workers, with 3,660 workers arrested and 21,427 dismissed worldwide for union activity.

At the 1997 AFL-CIO convention, delegates reiterated support for independent unions and workers' interests abroad in the face of international financial institutions' strong influences on the way governments and employers treat workers, giving them immense power to dictate economic policy to struggling nations. The World Trade Organization, which sets international rules for much of the world's trade, has resisted efforts to link trade policies with worker and human rights standards, effectively shielding member nations that tolerate gross violations of workers' rights.

When WTO trade ministers meet in Seattle late next



Global action: Working with the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center, AFT President Sandra Feldman took part in an International Labor Organization conference on child labor in Geneva last June.

month, the international union community will be there to demand that workers have a seat at the table when new trade rules are debated.

A global voice at work

To advance worker rights, the Solidarity Center, which was launched in 1997, administers a public education program

on the freedom to choose a union, through which its more than 27 field reps create information and resources for unionists worldwide. Working with such union initiatives as the UAW's prisoners of conscience program, the center fights for the release of imprisoned trade unionists, while publicizing widespread violations of freedom of association.

Workplace justice is especially vital for women, who make up 45 percent of the global workforce and 70 percent of the world's poor. The Solidarity Center and AFL-CIO affiliates seek to give working women, typically the lowest-paid workers, a bigger voice in their jobs and their unions. The center and UNITE actively support the organizing efforts of apparel workers, the majority of whom are women, in Central America and the Caribbean. These women have found new power as union leaders, activists and members. The center provides legal and activist assistance to the Inter-American Trade Union Institute for Racial Equality, which fights for gender discrimination language in Brazil's collective bargaining agreements. In Bangladesh's garment industry, where 90 percent of the workers are women, the Solidarity Center supports a campaign by unions and reps to encourage enforcement of the minimum wage.

Children are the most vulnerable workers. Throughout the world, UNITE has supported a wide variety of projects to get children out of exploitive work and into schools. In Pakistan, children risk their lives manufacturing medical implements for industrialized countries such as the United States. The Solidarity Center and the International Affairs Department work with affiliates such as AFSCME and AFT, whose health care workers are fighting the practice.

Working with affiliate unions, the International Affairs Department helped mobilize participation in the Global March Against Child Labor, which crossed the United States in May 1998. Unionists here are pressing Congress to ratify a new International Labor Organization convention prohibiting the worst forms of child labor, which was supported by AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, AFT President Sandra Feldman and President Clinton during the June 1999 ILO meeting in Geneva.

On the ground across the world

Solidarity Center representatives fight for workers' rights in every corner of the globe, in such countries as Thailand, India, Bangladesh and Kenya. In Africa, the Solidarity Center worked with the AFT and the UAW in Nigeria to win the release of imprisoned union leaders. The center also worked with building trades unions to create a joint training program in Egypt to help workers attain higher-level skills.

As a member of the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers, the AFL-CIO coordinates with unions throughout the hemisphere on projects that focus on the connection between trade agreements and international organizations. When U.S. clothing giant Phillips Van Heusen Corp. closed its only unionized plant in Central America last December, UNITE worked with the Solidarity Center to invite organizers from Guatemala to visit the United States and speak about the effects of U.S. corporate greed in their country. And when Titan Industries brought Uruguayan strikebreakers to plants in Iowa and Missouri last year, the center



International solidarity: The AFT, UAW, UFCW and the Solidarity Center worked to secure the release of jailed Indonesian union leader Dita Sari.

enabled the Steelworkers to meet with Uruguayan union leaders and politicians and stop the northbound flow of strikebreakers. "I think that the Solidarity Center made what was necessary actually happen," says Doug Niehouse of USWA's Strategic Projects Department.

Across the Atlantic, the Solidarity Center aids Croatian workers fighting recent efforts by the International Monetary Fund to force them to give back part of their already-negotiated salaries.

Prompted by a 1997 mine disaster in Bulgaria, the Mine Workers inspected several of that country's mines and reported to the Bulgarian government on their safety hazards, including antiquated equipment and lack of spare parts. "The miners were working there under very adverse circumstances," says UMW Health and Safety Director Joe Main, whose field team benefited from Solidarity Center help.

In the past two years, the Solidarity Center worked with the UAW, the AFT and the Food and Commercial Workers to secure the release of Indonesian labor leaders Dita Sari and Muchtar Pakpahan. With center assistance, the AFT helped educate more than 100,000 Burmese in Thai refugee camps, and encouraged union members to support selective purchasing and disinvestment campaigns here at home.

International visitors exchange

Unions take part in the Solidarity Center's International Visitors program, with PACE International Union hosting 10 Russian unionists at its Nashville, Tenn., headquarters to discuss global challenges posed by General Electric and other multinational corporations. The International Exchange Program brings union leaders together with their foreign counterparts—for example, sending Electronic Workers and Machinists officials to Europe to help develop a coordinated bargaining strategy for negotiations with GE, and arranging for Bosnian journalists to live with American working families for internships of up to 12 weeks, during which they work side by side with their colleagues from The Newspaper Guild/CWA at leading daily newspapers. ☐

COMMUNICATING Common Sense ECONOMICS

BY DAVID KAMERAS

BY TRANSLATING GLOBAL AND NATIONAL economic trends into pocketbook issues for working families, says Dan Fitzsimmons, "We've discovered that many of our members are really happy and enthusiastic about economic information they get from their union." Fitzsimmons, AFSCME field education coordinator in Chicago, says workers learn how their economy and society work, and see the connection between wealth and power and their jobs and family lives—"all of these things that impact their daily lives that they otherwise get from the corporate-controlled media. They say, 'We need more of this.'"

AFSCME incorporates elements of the AFL-CIO Common Sense Economics (CSE) program into much of its education and training efforts, including education conferences and steward and local union officer training. The union asks councils and locals to identify such opportunities as council conventions, trainings and newsletters through which the program's message can benefit the most members. AFGE, the Machinists and the Steelworkers tailor the CSE message to fit their members and sponsor their own train-the-trainer sessions.

Linking CSE to affiliate needs

CSE was a pilot program when the 1997 AFL-CIO convention adopted a resolution endorsing economics education for union and nonunion members.

Through train-the-trainer workshops, printed and visual classroom materials and publication kits for union periodicals, CSE effectively presents working families' perspective on the nation's changing economy, challenges assumptions, encourages questions and connects economic issues to union



BRENT NICAISTRO

Meeting members' needs: AFGE, IAM, USWA and AFT are just a few of the unions that tailor the Common Sense Economics message to fit their membership in trainings such as an AFT CSE workshop in 1998 (above).

**A NEW Voice
for WORKERS
in a Global
ECONOMY**



Pocketbook issues: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka takes part in a forum on Social Security, one of many issues union activists link to their pocketbooks in Common Sense Economics training.

organizing, bargaining and political, legislative and community action.

Some 520 union members participated in 33 CSE train-the-trainer programs in 1997 and 1998, highlighting the demand for expanded economics education. After initial evaluations by state federations and central labor councils, the AFL-CIO Education Department adjusted the curriculum to strengthen its links with union actions and programs and build membership support for political activities in conjunction with Labor '98. This year, the AFL-CIO boosted the number of sessions, coupling the union movement's overall mission and goals with the specific objectives of such affiliates as AFT, which ran 61 CSE programs from March to June 1999 for 2,230 participants from union leadership, steward and community groups. Before those sessions, the union had worked with the federation to train 19 educators.

Rich Klimmer, a national representative working with AFT's Union Leadership Institute, found the Education Department's efforts to tailor the program to individual union needs helpful. A member of the AFL-CIO Common Sense Economics Steering Committee, Klimmer recognized Social Security reform as a breaking issue for his union. "We used Social Security to open the door to getting economics education out to the leadership, membership and activists," he says.

Train-the-trainer sessions prepare affiliate activists to take the lead on CSE and ensure the training reaches large numbers of workers. To keep it up to date, the Education Department solicits feedback on participation levels, the usefulness of the program's materials and new ideas from the field.

For example, through components such as the program's *Basic Rap* and *Basic Workshop*, unions connect members with political and legislative activities, the bargaining process and such mobilization efforts as Street Heat, and boost participation in other educational programs. Some unions expand the program's outreach to high school students, community organizations and union apprentices.

Providing organizing support

Through the federation's Union Cities program, local unions within a community or region set up education committees and use CSE materials to conduct basic economics education classes. The Education Department

offers local unions assistance in setting up six-session study circle programs and Membership Education and Mobilization for Organizing (MEMO) programs, which train union members to train other members in organizing. At the local level, CSE is a key component of Changing to Organize, the AFL-CIO's challenge to every segment of the union movement to shift resources to organizing and increase membership.

Trainers adapt CSE to different audiences, increasing its value as an organizing tool. During a four-day session last April sponsored by the King County Labor Council, participants took turns shaping different Voice@Work messages for Seattle's union, religious and community groups. "It was very helpful," says Jonathan Rosenblum, director of Seattle Union Now, a multiunion organizing project. "It's a creative way to connect with people involved with social justice on different levels."

Building on their successful mobilization of unionists for Labor '98, Maine field staff and the state AFL-CIO hold CSE trainings to boost interest in organizing. Several unions, including the Carpenters, the Food and Commercial Workers and PACE International Union, form teams to conduct joint regional presentations before multiunion audiences.

Cynthia Phinney, an organizer with Electrical Workers Local 1837 in Manchester, Maine, calls CSE a good tool for informing members about their work environment. "Our local is on a mission to activate members and organize in the face of utility deregulation," she says. "We've had great classes, and the people are really excited," with some asking for copies of materials to take back to their shops, she says.

Like CSE, MEMO evolved with input from state federations and labor councils into a powerful and widely applicable organizing strategy. Graphic Communications staff members use its train-the-trainer component to advance their goal of signing up 1 percent of the union's membership to volunteer on organizing campaigns. The sessions link organizing with collective bargaining, living standards, political representation and economic and social justice.

"These are the questions that MEMO is designed to answer for members," says Fred Kotler of Cornell University, who helped develop the program and conducts the workshops. "Organizing is the key to power, and power is the key to changing laws, wages, working conditions and everything else." The Labor Council for Latin American Advancement also incorporates MEMO train-the-trainer sessions when educating local unions about organizing.

In the months ahead, the Education Department plans to examine affiliates' suggestions on how best to incorporate Common Sense Economics into the ongoing work of their unions. Ideas include making CSE mandatory for apprentice trainees, incorporating CSE in new member orientation and steward training programs, developing mini-sessions to piggyback onto regularly scheduled meetings, preparing kits for distribution at Labor Day events and reaching out to nonunion members. ☐



INVESTING IN Working Families' FUTURES

A NEW Voice
for WORKERS
in a Global
ECONOMY

BY DAVID KAMERAS

AMERICA'S WORKING FAMILIES DEPEND UPON three pillars of retirement security: savings, Social Security and private pension benefits. But increasingly in our global economy, pension money is invested in ways that hurt working families and their communities. If pension funds passively accept Wall Street's conventional wisdom, they can end up rewarding companies that downsize, outsource and relocate—and use pension fund money to lobby for anti-worker legislation.

In 1997, by adopting a resolution on strategies for workers in a changing global economy, delegates to the AFL-CIO convention endorsed the AFL-CIO Office of Investment's program to craft capital stewardship policies and practices that increase working families' retirement security. The Office of Investment fosters long-term investment strategies that support partnerships among shareholders, employees and communities, and helps retirement plan trustees—the union movement's financial organizers.

By increasing the accountability of the professionals who are entrusted with workers' pension resources, the office encourages them to manage that money strictly in the interest of protecting the retirement security of working families. To help fund managers achieve these investment goals, the center supports their efforts to identify and target worker-friendly investments and boost active ownership so that worker-owners wield greater influence over corporate management.

The Office of Investment in 1998 formed an Investment Product Review Working Group, including officers and staff from 11 international unions, to provide fund trustees with research that determines whether investments that describe themselves as pro-worker really support workers' objectives. The Working Group looks at job creation, workforce relations, ownership rights and public policy positions to offer fund trustees an independent assessment of these products. (However, the Working Group is not evaluating the finan-

cial performance of the products or their suitability as investments for any particular pension fund.)

Taking the high road

When AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and other union leaders broke ground last March for the Peoples Health Care Center, they took a major step toward revitalizing an historically African American neighborhood in Washington, D.C.—with the help of \$10 million in construction and permanent financing from the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust. In addition to the family-supportive union jobs needed to build the facility, the 125-bed nursing home for low-income seniors is expected to create more than 80 full-time and 46 part-time jobs for community residents.

Washington, D.C., Mayor Anthony Williams thinks the project means better health care for the Shaw neighborhood—and more. “It’s about pride in the community, good wages, union labor and a stronger economic base,” he says. “We think it’s important to work in partnership with unions to build this city.”

Channeling investment options and shareholder tools to create good jobs, foster economic development and advance the interests of working Americans enables union financial officers to help rebuild communities across America. They can achieve competitive returns while making worker-friendly investments and encouraging companies to take the high road in their business strategies.

In addition to steering funds toward community-building and job growth, union financial officers increasingly seek to create diverse portfolios—which most financial experts say help investors ride out the peaks and valleys of market cycles—by adding nonpublicly traded investments such as venture capital, start-ups, smaller companies and real estate investments. Often, these investments are also the most likely to create jobs. Typically, union plans allocate only 0.03 percent of their funds to private capital, compared with 5 percent to 10 percent invested by most corporate and public plans.

One such investment is ULLICO's Separate Account P; early investors have received an annualized 39 percent return since it was established in 1995. Contributing to this private equity's success are companies that recognize majority-voter decisions about organizing with neutrality and card-check agreements, such as Global Crossing, Omni Facilities Resources Inc. and Newport News Shipbuilding.

Unions that target their private capital investments can enhance benefits for their retirees while increasing employment opportunities for their members. The Boilermakers' Co-Generation and Infrastructure Fund co-invests in power plants. And the Food and Commercial Workers' Shopping Center Mortgage Loan Program finances construction loans and first mortgages for developers who anchor new shopping centers and strip malls with union supermarkets.

Shareholder action

Exercising their rights as shareholders gives pension and benefit funds influence over how corporations are run—more than \$5 trillion worth of influence, which is how much American workers' savings represent, according to the Federal Reserve Board. The AFL-CIO Office of Investment supports shareholder activism, a strategy that pays off for pension and benefit funds. For example, the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees achieved what union Research Director Matthew Walker calls “an upset victory for shareholders” when it successfully defended Marriott stakeholders from a power grab that would have concentrated corporate power in the Marriott family's hands.

In Cincinnati, the building trades established a Worker-Owner Council, a community-based organization that mobilizes workers to engage locally based public corporations in which building trades pensions nationally hold ownership. “The idea is that workers represent a broad range of a corporation's constituency, standing as owners, employees, customers and community members,” says Ed Durkin, the Carpenters' director of special programs, noting the council's success in employing shareholder resolutions to encourage high-level corporate officers to address a broad range of issues affecting all these companies' constituencies.

Through the Plumbers and Pipe Fitters' Proxy Voting Service, which gives workers a voice in corporate leadership and corrals support for worker-friendly proposals at shareholder meetings, the union marshals the power of more than \$50 billion in stock holdings into a formidable presence in the boardroom. UA General Secretary-Treasurer Thomas Patchell says the program teaches corporate officers that employing highly

KAYE H. SARDARI/PAGE ONE



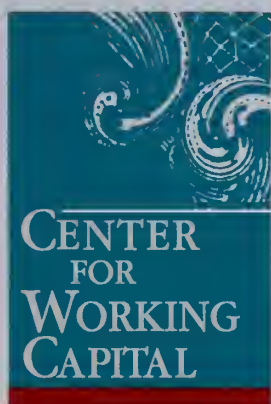
Investing at home: A Washington, D.C., community celebrated the ground-breaking of a 125-bed nursing home facility that resulted from a partnership among union pension funds, federal housing assistance programs and a local development organization.

trained union workers improves their bottom line. “At its heart, our Proxy Voting Service exemplifies one of the finest principles of trade unionism—joining our voices together as one to have a greater impact than any of us as single individuals could ever hope to have,” he says.

Runaway CEO pay, which according to *Business Week* averaged 42 times the average factory wage in 1980 and 419 times that wage in 1998, dilutes shareholder value and hurts employee morale. With much of their compensation pegged to a rising stock market, corporate officers profit by boosting short-term stock prices, often by slashing payrolls and selling off plants. Unions work to rein in exorbitant pay and stock options through shareholder proposals to cap compensation and exclude directors with personal ties to the CEO from devising pay packages.

In April, the AFL-CIO Staff Pension Fund got a huge one-third of the vote on a shareholder proposal to get Chubb Corp., an insurance group, to limit its CEO pay. Also this year, the Machinists persuaded UAL, the parent of United Airlines, to link executive pay to measures of worker and customer satisfaction. And a vigorous effort by the Flight Attendants convinced US Airways management to forgo millions of dollars in bonuses. US Airways Chairman Stephen Wolf was “already making an outrageous amount of money, so declining the bonus was a step in the right direction,” says Lynn Lenosky, president of the AFA Master Executive Council at US Airways.

Through the Office of Investment and the Investment Product Review Working Group, affiliate unions have fought to ensure that members' retirement money works for fund beneficiaries, not against them. In the coming months, the AFL-CIO will step up efforts to hold corporations accountable for policies that hurt working families and their communities, and will shine a light on analysts and investment managers who favor the interests of CEOs over those of shareholders. And with pension money increasingly invested abroad, the federation will work with unions all over the world to make global corporations and global capital markets create value and jobs for all workers rather than just enriching a privileged few. ☐



The Center for Working Capital, formed in 1997, is an independent, nonprofit organization that provides news, tools and information to assist the stewardship of the assets of working families. The center works to ensure that retirement plans are managed in the best interests of beneficiaries while promoting broad-based economic prosperity. “With more than \$5 trillion in assets, working families

deserve a stronger voice in how American corporations are governed,” says Director Monte Tarbox. “The center helps their retirement funds do well by doing good.” ☐

Educating and Training Workers FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

BY ARLEE C. GREEN

AMERICA'S UNIONS ARE PREPARING TO ENTER the next century on the cutting edge of education by transforming the role of apprenticeship and union training into higher education opportunities for union workers. In turn, workers can take those skills and not only amplify the voice of working families but also build a stronger union movement.

At the heart of this transformation are the George Meany Center for Labor Studies and the National Labor College, both located on a 47-acre campus in Silver Spring, Md. The Meany Center has been advancing union education for more than a quarter century, offering some 70 weeklong seminars each year, hosting union conferences and classes and serving as a training facility for unionists from other countries. Each year, more than 7,500 students attend classes and seminars offered there by the National Labor College, the George Meany Center or AFL-CIO affiliate unions.

In July, 88 students were part of the first graduating class of the National Labor College, which was established as a four-year, degree-granting institution in 1997. The Labor College has received state accreditation and is a candidate for regional accreditation; its programs are tailored to best serve union activists, organizers, leaders and rank-and-file members who have full-time work and family commitments.

The Labor College represents the single greatest change in the union movement's educational structure and is a "milestone for labor," says Tony Picarazzi, the Sheet Metal Workers' director of education. As a member of the college's first graduating class, Picarazzi experienced firsthand the value of a good education and a college degree. Through the college, he says, "SMWIA members are able to get an education, and that helps, especially when we're sitting across the table from engineers and business owners."

"Building this institution to its potential is what the next five years will be about," says Sue Schurman, president of the college and executive director of the George Meany Center. "What that means at this point is building the affli-



RAY CROWELL/PAGE ONE

Milestone for unions: Eighty-eight students were part of the National Labor College's first graduating class in July 1999.

ate parts of the structure." Schurman notes the education programs of AFL-CIO affiliates constitute "one of the largest post-secondary education systems in the world."

Turning skills into college credit

Through apprenticeship and training classes offered by AFL-CIO affiliate unions, hundreds of thousands of union workers over the years have furthered their education, improved their skills and boosted their pay. Now, through the Labor College, they can earn college credit based on union training and other life experiences.

Over the past two years, the college has worked with fed-

eration affiliates to assess union apprenticeships, training programs and classes, and assign them college credits that union members can apply toward a college degree.

Providing college credit for knowledge learned through apprenticeship and life experiences opens doors to students who otherwise might not have tried to go further with their education, Schurman says, and makes them more committed union activists. "Apprenticeship assessments can benefit the union, the student and the entire labor movement."

The Labor College evaluates the courses unions offer in relationship to its curriculum and awards semester-hour credits; the college requires 120 semester hours of credit to graduate. The Laborers' three-year apprenticeship, as assessed by the Labor College, merits 60 quarter-hours of credit.

The SMWIA's apprenticeship program, which involves four to five years of union training, was valued at 48 semester-hours of credit. The college also allows SMWIA members up to 36 semester-hours of life experience credits. With those combined credits, a student needs just 36 additional semester-hours of credit to earn a bachelor's degree. Half that amount, Picarazzi says, can come from the six classes the union teaches at the George Meany Center. The remainder come from required Labor College labor courses, allowing students to earn a degree in any of seven labor studies disciplines.

As part of the process to evaluate union training programs, the Labor College also seeks to upgrade union instructors' skills. For union training programs to maintain their educational status, there is increasing pressure from state agencies for instructors to have college degrees, says Greg Giebel, college provost. LIUNA leaders, for instance, are seeking to upgrade instructor training, and the union's development program is designed to help trainers earn bachelor's degrees through the college.

The Labor College also is encouraging partnerships with other institutions. Building trades unions in the St. Louis area have been successful in securing college credits for their apprenticeship programs at several community colleges.

John Gaal, coordinator for the St. Louis Carpenters Joint Apprenticeship Program, says the Jefferson Community College extends 45 semester credits to workers who complete the Carpenters apprenticeship program, which is certified by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training. The community college provides the same number of credits for each apprenticeship program for all of the unions in the local building trades council, plus a few unions outside the council, such as the Machinists. In turn, four other community colleges now are providing college credit toward an associate degree.

"The next area of focus will be helping my members move from associate degrees to bachelor's degrees," says Gaal.

Funding scholarships

To enable as many members as possible to obtain training and degrees at the Meany Center, the Labor College works with unions to establish scholarships and other financial aid sources for union members and staff attending the college. The college is assisting international unions, local unions,



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

Credit for skills: Union apprenticeship programs enable members to receive credit toward an undergraduate degree at the Labor College.

AFL-CIO state federations and central labor councils in establishing scholarship funds for its students, and is helping to promote and administer the funds. Four members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers who graduated from the Labor College in July were recipients of Vaughn Ball Scholarships, named after the union's late director of research and education.

AFGE recently set up the JNS Scholarship Program, named for the union's late president, John N. Sturdivant, who earned a college degree through the Meany Center's Antioch College program. Funding for the JNS Scholarship, which received contributions from the AFL-CIO, will total \$10,000 by 2002 to provide scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 annually.

At AFSCME, the Joey Parisi Memorial Scholarship—named for a longtime union organizer—covers tuition, administrative fees, room, board, airfare costs and up to \$500 for books. The Communications Workers aids its members with \$3,000 awards from the Joseph Anthony Beirne Foundation Scholarship, in memory of the first president of CWA.

Similar room, board and tuition aid are offered by the Painters and Allied Trades, which has 435 apprenticeship programs in the United States and Canada, with 10,096 apprentices currently enrolled, says Richard Hackney, the union's administrator for the Joint Apprenticeship Training Fund.

Through union scholarships, college credit for life experiences and union training, flexibility in course scheduling and worker-friendly instructional formats, the George Meany Center and the National Labor College have built the foundation in the past two years for meeting the 21st century educational needs of union members. In an Information Age that demands enhanced skills and greater knowledge, the George Meany Center and the National Labor College are helping all union members build their futures. ☐

Working FOR AMERICA

Building
Our
FUTURE

BY ARLEE C. GREEN

AMERICA'S UNIONS ARE CHANGING TO MEET the challenges of creating, expanding and retaining good jobs. Last year, the AFL-CIO established the Working for America Institute, adding to its historic job training role the mission of retaining and creating quality jobs that provide economic security to workers while strengthening communities.

Formerly the Human Resources Development Institute, which worked extensively on programs under the federal Job Training Partnership Act, the institute builds on 30 years of experience with job training programs.

The Working for America Institute seeks to retain and create good jobs by developing programs to convert "low-road" employer practices to "high-road" behavior that respects workers and provides quality jobs, family-supporting wages and safe workplaces. Key to the institute's strategy is aiding in the creation of union-community partnerships to build strong communities and economies that expand the availability of quality jobs. The institute is developing strategies to work with the Workforce Investment Act that Congress passed in August 1998 to restructure the federal employment training system and give states greater power in determining how money is spent. To achieve that, WAI is helping unions build strong communities and diversified economies through partnerships with a wide range of community-based organizations and high-road employers. Those coalitions will serve to expand

unions' voice, role and representation on Workforce Investment Boards.

"Our goal is to build world-class communities with competitive, successful economies that are good for working people," says Bruce Herman, institute director. The institute is helping federation affiliates empower union representatives on new state and local boards created by the 1998 act, to ensure workers' voices are heard.



Broadening unions' role in key industries

Working for America is developing strategies to broaden unions' ability to change the economy and key industries to benefit working families. As a first step, the institute assessed 14 local or regional partnerships of union, business, community and public-sector groups, gleaned strategies and relationships that made each successful. Based on those results, the institute is designing technical assistance tools to help unions launch high-road initiatives in other communities.

For example, the institute assessed the Garment Industry Development Corporation, created by UNITE in 1984 in conjunction with the New York apparel industry and government agencies. GIDC programs "enhance the job security of our members, thereby strengthening the participating companies, and help the workers develop and maintain the skills they need in a highly competitive industry," says UNITE President Jay Mazur. "We try to get companies to take the high road and compete based on quality and high worker skills."

After studying the GIDC, the institute saw how the partnership strengthened the state's apparel industry by providing worker training, developing marketing strategies and advising companies on production modernization. Its marketing efforts involved creating a niche for high-end fashion apparel that is union-made in New York—an effort that generated more than \$60 million in new production and created high-end jobs for union members.

"Our strategy is to not only support existing jobs, but to make them better," says Linda Dworak, acting executive director of GIDC. The partnership works to ensure manufacturers remain economically viable by expanding markets and boosting workers' skills, and enabling UNITE members to gain increased employability, access to new career paths and improved working conditions.

In 1998, the GIDC opened a 9,500-square-foot training facility, the Fashion Industry Modernization Center, in the heart of the city's garment district. Classes are taught in English, Chinese and Spanish to about 600 workers a year. The center also holds management training in human relations skills and labor law.



Expanding unions' role: The Working for America Institute took a close look at a union-industry partnership in New York City's garment district that provides training to workers to upgrade their skills and learn their right to safe workplaces.



Training is not traditionally a function of the factory, says Dworak, so "when we train workers and help them adopt more efficient ways of working, it is reflected directly in their pay if they are working on a piece rate." In addition to skills training, GIDC provides classes in English as a second language.

Instructors teach workers on the latest computerized equipment, helping the workers maintain their employability.

"This kind of training opens up opportunities that the workers otherwise wouldn't have," says Ana Perez, GIDC senior vocational training and field agent.

"We teach them methods that are more efficient and safer, so they don't get carpal tunnel syndrome," she says. And when a worker wants to rise along the career ladder, such as from sewing to making patterns, "we help provide the skills they need," Perez says.

The benefits of the GIDC partnership extend beyond the factory gates. After a decade of declining employment, New York City has seen "a stabilization in the apparel industry workforce, and GIDC played a significant role in that," says Mazur.

Getting a seat at the table

Working for America also assists with regional and industry audits to determine areas of high job growth and industries in which members' jobs are at risk and companies are not competitive. Audits help determine the actions unions and partnerships can take to move employers from low-road practices.

Such assessments help determine future investments of economic resources, says Goetz Wolff, research director of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. The size of the Los Angeles-area workforce would qualify it as the ninth-largest state, he says, so it's important to be part of the decision making process that determines how state and federal economic development dollars are spent.

"We want to be at the table when the decisions are made. We have a right and an obligation to our members to take an active leadership role in how they are made," says Wolff, adding that the labor council is examining industries to determine employment training strategies.

The institute's national conferences in 1998 and 1999 each involved more than 400 representatives from unions, employers, government agencies and community organizations who shared strategies for worker training, education and economic development. The conferences enabled participants to share and develop plans and programs on strengthening unions' role in creating and retaining quality jobs.

The Working for America Institute helps unions become active participants in decision making on worker training and economic development strategies. In its first year, the Working for America Institute has set the stage for unions to form alliances and partnerships that can create job and community security and seek to put all employers on the high road. ☐

Wiring WORKING FAMILIES

BY ARLEE C. GREEN

THE INTERNET IS AN UNPARALLELED SOURCE of information, educational opportunities and consumer services—but access to the benefits of high technology are limited to those who can afford it. Households with annual incomes of \$75,000 and more are 20 times more likely to have access to the Internet than those at the lowest income levels, according to the U.S. Commerce Department's *Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide*.

The report, based on 1998 Census Bureau data, shows the digital divide separating information "haves" and "have nots" widened from 1997 to 1998: "As we enter the Information Age, access to computers and the Internet is becoming increasingly vital. It is in everyone's interest to ensure that no American is left behind."

To ensure that 21st century technology and the opportunities it provides are not limited to America's elite, today's unions are working to extend Internet access, and the hardware and software that fuel it, to all working families. And they are working to build an electronic community in which union members can find and interact around the information they need as working people and as family members.

This new online labor community will connect union members with their local and international unions, the AFL-CIO, constituency groups—and other union members. It will provide union members one main access point to the Internet—a personalized "portal" page tailored by the indi-



Building
Our
FUTURE

vidual user to his or her own interests and featuring, for example, news stories, stock quotes, links, private chat areas and even perhaps a daily horoscope.

Communication between unions and their members and among union members will be a big advantage, says Michael Krueger, director of information services for the Steelworkers, who set up an "intranet" for his union a year ago. "Wiring working families adds a new dimension, going from the lodge level right down to the membership. We've opened that door with our intranet and given our people a direct voice." Members and locals have more direct access to information and more control over its accuracy, he says, pointing out that locals can update membership files online.

"We've been able to disseminate a whole array of information that we couldn't have before," Krueger says. "We can mobilize and respond to issues much faster, using a combination of e-mail, faxing and private webpages."

To enable working people to access the online labor community at reasonable cost, the federation has developed plans to offer low-cost Internet service and discounted American-made computers for union families. A range of union-friendly products also will be available to working families through an e-commerce shopping link, and the federation is considering how to add an education component that will allow union members to tap into a variety of training.

Perhaps because union members have higher incomes than other workers, union households already are logging on to the Internet at higher rates than the general public. In 1998, 57 percent of union households had computers and 81 percent of them were able to go online, according to a Peter D. Hart Research Associates survey. Those figures compare with 54 percent of the general public who have computers in 1999, 70 percent of whom are online, according to Arbitron data. Sixty-seven percent of union members with computers had purchased them in the previous two years, and of those without home computers, 46 percent say they are likely to buy one within the next two years.

The AFL-CIO wants to provide that opportunity to every union family. After a year of development, the federation's plan to "wire" working families now comes down to providing discounted, state-of-the-art, American-made computers; providing a worker-friendly e-commerce link; and creating the infrastructure to connect union members electronically with their unions and with one another. *For more information, e-mail: Leslie Tolf at ltolf@aflcio.org.* ■

Launching a UNION COMMUNITY FUND

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BY JAMES B. PARKS

THE UNION COMMUNITY FUND IS A NEW charity, piloted by the AFL-CIO, that enables working people to respond collectively to communities' needs through financial support and volunteerism.

"As a sister organization to today's unions, the Union Community Fund complements the labor community's message of social and economic justice through philanthropic action," says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, the fund's chief spokesperson. "The fund will show the strength of working families' values while their unions show the strength of their voices."

As today's unions build new partnerships in their communities with clergy, civil rights groups and other activists, they will see the new fund as a center for the Working Families Agenda in the nonprofit arena.

"This is a long-overdue effort by the trade union movement to have union members direct their charity within their communities, so the fruits of their labor can be shared with the less fortunate," says Letter Carriers President Vincent Sombrotto, who chairs the AFL-CIO Executive Council Community Services Committee.

The fund will "add another face to unions in our communities," says Chavez-Thompson. "Imagine a community in which our members join together to provide support for local school children who need computers and other equipment to help them succeed. The strength of our members' generosity would be held up for the whole community to see."

The governing power of the fund rests with local community boards, which will assess the needs of their own communities and call upon working people to rise to support those areas most important to

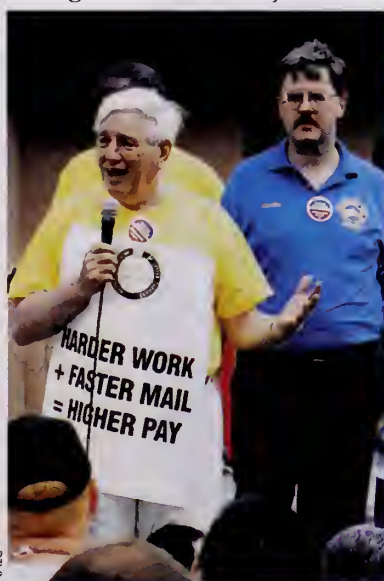
them. This local board of union members, activists and leaders will study their own community to create a plan upon which they will base their fund-raising campaign. The goal of the plan is to assure a strategic approach to giving that addresses the causes and manifestations of a community's needs. For example, a board may choose to fund soup kitchens and homeless shelters to treat the manifestations of poverty. But the plan also would fund programs that address the causes of poverty, such as layoffs, adult illiteracy or lack of job training. Local boards also will identify volunteer opportunities and encourage union member participation.

A small portion of the Union Community Fund's resources will be available for national efforts. "The national labor movement could establish a beachhead in nonunion towns—leading with humanitarian assistance and workers' rights education," Chavez-Thompson says.

The Union Community Fund is not designed to replace union support of the United Way, says Chavez-Thompson, who serves on United Way's executive committee along with Communications Workers Secretary-Treasurer Barbara Easterling. "We should be careful not to jeopardize the important work of the United Way. We must also recognize that United Way currently funds many programs that are in our interest, such as our labor liaisons and the community services agencies. We adopted the dual goals of strengthening the bond with United Way while, at the same time, assuring that our voice is heard." For instance, the new charity may share the proceeds of local United Way campaigns or the funds may be forwarded to the Union Community Fund through designated giving.

The fund's success

will rest on union leaders and activists recognizing its role in advancing the interests of working people, and on the willingness of members to give of their time and money. "The generous hearts of union people," says Chavez-Thompson, "show that union members really want to do good in their communities." @



**The Union Community Fund
"is a long-overdue effort by
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—LETTER CARRIERS PRESIDENT
VINCENT SOMBROTTO

MAKING
Government Work
for **WORKING**
Families

FIGHTING TO PASS A Working Families AGENDA

BY MIKE HALL

IN 1997, DELEGATES TO THE AFL-CIO convention vowed to go on the legislative offensive for working families. "Making Government Work for Working Families," the legislative and political resolution delegates adopted at the Pittsburgh convention, mandated the federation's Legislative Department, working with affiliate unions and political allies, to engage working families in policy debates and to build a grassroots mobilization network with trained activists to hold lawmakers accountable.

In the past two years, workers and their unions have stepped up their mobilization efforts to turn back anti-working family legislation and have succeeded in derailing most of the GOP's ill-conceived, anti-worker proposals. At the same time, working families have won key victories: defeat of the Fast Track trade-authorization legislation; increased funding for key worker protection programs, including those put forth by the National Labor Relations Board and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration; and defeat of state and federal efforts to silence the political voice of working families via paycheck deception initiatives.

A Working Families Agenda

To determine what mattered most to working families, the AFL-CIO, working with state federations, central labor councils and community groups, held more than two dozen town hall-style meetings in 1998. Thousands of working families spoke to union leaders and policymakers about the issues

critical to them. Those meetings, combined with extensive focus group research and detailed surveys of union members around the country, helped develop the AFL-CIO Working Families Agenda—the cornerstone of unions' 1998 legislative and political efforts.

Working families said they wanted *affordable and quality health care*: Unions and worker-friendly lawmakers developed the Patients' Bill of Rights that called for medical decisions to be made by doctors, not HMO or insurance company bureaucrats, and ensured access to emergency rooms and specialists.

Working families said *Social Security and Medicare must be protected and strengthened*: Unions, like President Clinton, have sought to strengthen Social Security, not privatize it, and to use the federal surplus to shore up Medicare and add a prescription drug benefit. At rallies, demonstrations and lobbying visits this fall, union members have condemned the tax cuts for the



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

Hill action: Steelworkers fired up their 'rapid response' mobilization effort to fight Fast Track in 1997 and 1998.

rich the congressional majority passed this summer at the expense of funding such critical family programs as Social Security and Medicare.

Working families said quality education for their children in safe, well-equipped and well-staffed schools was a priority: Unions and community allies worked hard to pass federal legislation in 1998 that provides some \$1.2 billion for schools to hire 30,000 new teachers. To address overcrowded classrooms and crumbling school buildings, the AFL-CIO, AFT and the building and construction trades unions are working together this year to support legislation that would provide \$3.2 billion in federal tax credits to help school districts pay the interest on \$24.8 billion in bonds to repair, modernize and rebuild the nation's public schools.

Working families said equal pay and fair wages for women and all workers in the changing workforce should be ensured: Unions and women's, civil rights and other groups working to support equal pay legislation in Congress began a campaign for pay equity in more than two dozen state legislatures. Building on a successful, union-led campaign in 1996 to raise the minimum wage—for the first time since 1991—workers and their unions lobbied for another modest increase in 1998 and 1999 to help families pay their bills and raise their children. The AFL-CIO helped shape federal legislation this year to address pay and benefit inequities faced by the growing number of workers classified as independent contractors.

Working families said workers must have the freedom to choose a voice at work and join unions: In 1998, working families focused on critical congressional and state legislative battles to defeat anti-union measures that sought to silence workers' voices. In June 1998, they scored a monumental victory when they defeated Proposition 226, California's paycheck deception act—and went on to vanquish similar proposals in 31 other states where voters, legislatures or judges turned back paycheck deception measures. In Congress, a paycheck deception bill was defeated by 80 votes as a result of working families' efforts.

Mobilization and accountability

When it comes to making lawmakers listen, many lobbyists have fat wallets, but they don't have a big voting bloc—and when unions mobilize their members for grassroots action, lawmakers listen.

Lawmakers listened when working families told them Fast Track trade authority was a bad deal for working families. Fast Track would have enabled the president to negotiate trade deals and Congress to approve or reject the entire package, allowing for no additional provisions to improve workers' rights or address other shortcomings.

To combat Fast Track, the UAW, Machinists and Steelworkers mobilized their members nationwide, UNITE rallied members through worksite meetings and Teamsters demonstrated and marched in cities all over the country. In all, working families made more than 800,000 phone calls and sent more than 750,000 postcards to Congress saying it was time to derail Fast Track. On Nov. 10, 1997, House leaders saw the votes slipping away and pulled Fast Track legislation from consideration. A year later, when GOP House Speaker Newt Gingrich and his cronies tried to revive the trade



Rebuilding our schools: Building and construction trades members are joining with AFT and the AFL-CIO in a legislative campaign to repair schools and make them safe for our children.

scheme, working families mobilized again, and the bill failed by 63 votes.

Perhaps the biggest threat to the future of working families is the greed-driven effort to privatize Social Security and turn it over to Wall Street speculators. To educate union members and train volunteer activists, the unions of the AFL-CIO launched a major grassroots initiative in 1998 that included more than 40 community summits to educate working families about what's at stake in the fight to strengthen Social Security and to expand participation in the campaign. Local unions, CLCs and state federations held more than 600 training sessions to equip workers to become Social Security activists. Social Security action teams formed to organize grassroots efforts, hold worksite actions and lobby state and local politicians. Members from dozens of unions made more than 100 grassroots lobbying visits to congressional representatives.

At a March rally outside Rep. Paul Ryan's (R) office in Kenosha, Wis.—as at dozens of events around the country aimed at holding lawmakers accountable—working families protested his vote for enacting huge tax cuts rather than setting aside surplus funds for Social Security and Medicare. “Congress should listen to what working families want: a secure retirement and health care benefits they can count on when they retire,” said John Drew, UAW Local 72 president.

Two years ago, a hostile, anti-worker Congress, building on the momentum of the 1996 elections, threatened such hard-fought gains as labor laws protecting workers' voice on the job and safety at work. Trade deals that could export jobs and Wall Street-backed plans to privatize Social Security seemed imminent.

But through union members' issues mobilization, the right-wing edge in the House has been reduced to single digits (see page 37). Working families have succeeded in taking back the agenda from Big Business interests.

While the fight against anti-worker initiatives continues, the willingness of working families to stay involved beyond the election cycle—to rally for Social Security, march for Medicare or write letters, phone and e-mail their lawmakers—means those measures have little chance to succeed. @

MOBILIZING **for** SAFE JOBS

MAKING
Government Work
for WORKING
Families

BY MIKE HALL

TWO YEARS AGO, WHEN THE UNIONS OF THE AFL-CIO gathered in Pittsburgh, they said it was time to “stand up for safe jobs in a safe world.” Delegates passed a resolution affirming that affiliate unions, working closely with the federation’s Safety and Health Department, would work to expand and strengthen such worker protections as those under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration; fight for injured workers by battling corporate-backed workers’ compensation “reforms” around the country; and educate, mobilize and organize around health and safety issues.

Since then, workers and their unions have waged many tough battles. Anti-worker lawmakers in Congress continued the barrage of attacks they began in 1995 after the Republicans won control of the U.S. House of Representatives and have made repeated attempts to rein in OSHA, limit workers’ rights and free up business from strong workplace safety laws.

At the state level, Big Business-backed efforts to roll back workers’ compensation laws ripped through legislatures as anti-worker lawmakers sought to reduce or eliminate coverage and even deny workers access to their own medical records—all while increasing profits for insurers.

Expanding protection

Together with their unions, workers have fought back, making critical progress in ensuring job safety. In September 1998, a long battle by the Postal Workers, Letter



EARL DOTTER

Teamwork: Building trades workers rerouting I-95 in Boston are part of a multiunion health and safety committee spearheaded by the Laborers.

Carriers and Mail Handlers paid off when President Clinton signed into law legislation bringing almost 800,000 workers under the workplace protections of OSHA.

Since the new law, "There have been many changes in management's attitude," such as required safety training and making workplace safety literature available, says Joyce Anderson, maintenance craft director for APWU Local 480-481 in Ferndale, Mich.

Through the continuing efforts of working families, the 1999 fiscal year spending bill for the U.S. Department of Labor did not ban OSHA from spending money on developing ergonomic rules.

With some 1,000 construction workers killed on the job each year, the 15 unions that make up the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department worked together to reduce construction deaths and injuries by launching the Smart Mark program in 1998. More than 20,000 building trades members have completed the 10-hour safety and health training program approved by

OSHA and developed with the Construction Industry Partnership and the Labor Management Committee for the Construction Industry. In addition, the BCTD's Center to Protect Workers' Rights is researching ways to prevent fatalities, injuries and illnesses. Recent studies have focused on crane-related deaths and the use of water-based strippers and lacquers instead of solvent-based products to reduce hazards to workers.

The new programs, added to long-standing apprenticeship and training programs and labor-management efforts, means safer and healthier workplaces for union members.

Unions also have taken significant steps to address workplace violence. AFSCME, which represents some 40,000

country and is working to develop solutions to the growing problem. AFSCME locals have bargained many job protections—such as better jobsite security and "buddy" systems for field workers.

On the national level, the Food and Commercial Workers developed with OSHA new recommendations on preventing workplace violence in retail establishments. UFCW President Douglas Dority says the recommendations were urgently needed because "some employers would rather deny the problem than do something about it."

One of the more dangerous problems health care workers face is injuries from accidental needle sticks. About 1 million workers each year are injured by contaminated needles that can put them at risk for hepatitis B and C, HIV and other deadly diseases. This year, SEIU launched a grassroots campaign to pass state and federal legislation mandating the use of safer needles. So far, California and Tennessee have approved laws calling for protective shields or mechanisms that automatically draw the needle back into the barrel after use. Safe needle legislation has been introduced in more than two dozen states and is pending in the U.S. Congress.

Throughout, the AFL-CIO and affiliate unions have battled for stronger whistle-blower protections on the federal and state levels for workers exposed to dangerous workplace practices. And to ensure union activists, who are on the front line in defending worker safety, have the resources, information and training they need, the AFL-CIO National Safety and Health Conference in November 1997 offered more than 800 local union safety and health committee members, officers and stewards the opportunity to discuss strategies to mobilize and organize around job safety issues.

Last November, the Safety and Health Department brought more than 100 union safety experts and organizers together in Maryland to explore ways to mobilize and organize around such safety issues as showing workers the strength and expertise a union can use to address workplace safety problems management ignores. For instance, the union effort at Avondale shipyard has resulted in OSHA crackdowns and fines at a facility with higher-than-average injury and death rates, and has built a strong worker base. Safety and health activists will meet again Dec. 12–15 in New Orleans for the 1999 National Safety and Health Conference.

Unions' fight for workplace safety continues. In February, OSHA announced it would issue proposed ergonomics rules that could reduce the repetitive motion injuries that affect some 600,000 workers a year. OSHA, the National Academy of Sciences and most occupational safety organizations say there is plenty of scientific evidence to support ergonomic standards. But pressure from Big Business spurred GOP lawmakers to introduce a bill forbidding any OSHA action on ergonomic rules until another scientific study is completed in 2001.

Communications Workers' experience shows that ergonomic standards work. Safety Director David LaGrande says that after the union negotiated strong



social workers and other members in public-sector jobs where violence is a hazard, completed a study on the risks its 13,380 child welfare workers face around the

ergonomic standards with U.S. West and Southwestern Bell Communications, ergonomic-related injury rates declined. The union also has established the CWA Workplace Ergonomics Awareness program, in which local union members receive training in preventing injuries at work, the latest regulatory information from OSHA and workers' compensation news.

Before the House voted this summer, more than 100 union members packed a committee hearing to protest the bill to delay ergonomics rules and union members made thousands of phone calls to urge its defeat. The bill passed on a nearly party-line vote Aug. 3. President Clinton says he will veto it if it reaches his desk.

Working with community allies

Employers and the insurance industry have tried to cut back workers' compensation laws drastically in dozens of state legislatures. The result, according to a National Academy of Social Insurance study, is a 23 percent drop in benefits since 1992. Employers' premium costs are down \$6 billion in the past three years, making workers' comp the most profitable line of insurance in the property-casualty field, a National Association of Insurance Commissioners report found.

In November 1997, Ohio unions mobilized to win the biggest workers' comp victory in years. Central labor councils and the state federation, working with local unions, convinced Ohio voters to overturn a new workers' comp law that would have eliminated coverage for most occupational diseases, particularly repetitive stress injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome, slashed workers' rights to file claims and even banned them from looking at their own medical records.

A coalition of union and community groups turned an early 2-1 disadvantage into a 57-percent-to-43-percent victory. The Steelworkers, UAW, Communications Workers, UFCW, AFSCME and Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees played big roles, hand-billing at plant gates and worksites, spurring mobilization through union publications, staffing phone banks and planting tens of thousands of yard signs urging residents to vote "no" on the measure.

"We've proven in Ohio that people can be more powerful than money," says Bill Burga, Ohio AFL-CIO president.

Elsewhere, safety and health activists who are joining in coalitions with injured workers' groups in many states—like unionists in living wage and organizing campaigns—also have found that working with community allies provides a better chance for victory. In Colorado, unions won a key legal decision this year to place a safe workplace initiative on the ballot that would allow injured workers to sue



BILL JORDAN

"Health and safety progress is stalled because of the profits-before-people crowd and their allies in Congress."

—UAW President Steve Yokich

employers who knowingly exposed workers to unsafe situations. Workers also are preparing to fight new efforts to weaken workers' comp laws in New York and Illinois.

Union activists, working with the federation's Safety and Health Department, have made clear inroads for workplace safety despite the obstacles of an anti-

worker Congress and Big Business-backed state legislatures. To maintain momentum, workers and their unions must continue to mobilize at the grassroots level, take legislative action and generate public support through worker-community coalitions. ☐

Educating, Mobilizing and ORGANIZING

Every April, Workers Memorial Day gives union members, health and safety activists and working families the opportunity to come together to honor workers who have lost their lives on the job and rededicate their energies to ensuring safe workplaces. Across the nation, union members mobilize on that day to shine a light on workers' struggle for safe workplaces and strong workplace safety protections, and to expose the anti-worker lawmakers and Big Business interests behind the fight to slash OSHA's funding, weaken its enforcement power and curb its ability to develop stronger new safety measures.

More than 1,500 union members who have participated in Workers Memorial Day events and Safety and Health Department conferences have joined the fight for safe jobs and signed up to be part of an activists network. Hundreds of others have signed up on the AFL-CIO website at www.aflcio.org.

At an event commemorating the February deaths of six UAW members at Ford's Rouge Complex and eight other UAW members killed in 1998, UAW President Steve Yokich told workers that while technology is available to make major improvements in workplace health and safety, "progress is stalled because of the profits-before-people crowd and their allies in Congress." ☐

Mourn
for the dead
Fight
for the living
AFL-CIO
ORGANIZE AND MOBILIZE FOR SAFE JOBS

BUILDING TO WIN, Building to LAST

BY MIKE HALL

"THE AFL-CIO WILL WORK TO MAKE GOVERNMENT more accountable to working people by mobilizing in greater and greater numbers."



CHRIS FARINA

People-powered politics: On Election Day 1998, working families and their unions won key victories at the local, state and national levels and elected hundreds of union members to office.

Putting that strategy from the 1997 convention resolution, "Making Government Work for Working Families," into action and building on the revitalization of union political strategies in Labor '96, the unions of the AFL-CIO scored major victories in the 1998 elections by:

- Turning a 70-percent-to-30-percent margin of support for California's anti-worker Proposition 226 into a 54-percent-to-46-percent defeat of the measure, one of a series of similar Big Business-backed ballot and legislative proposals under consideration across the nation in 1998 that were designed to silence workers' political voice.
- Transforming a projected loss of 20 to 25 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives into a five-seat gain for working family candidates that November.
- Running at least 626 union members for local, state and national office and electing 67 percent of them.

Anti-worker candidates enjoyed many advantages in 1998, including backing by corporate benefactors who filled their campaign war chests. In fact, the Center for Responsive Politics reported that working families were out-spent 12-to-1 by Big Business in donations to candidates.

Grover Norquist, a Republican strategist and key figure behind the attempts to silence working families through such measures as Proposition 226, told the *Sacramento Bee* in April 1998 that his goal was "to crush labor as a political entity [and] break the unions."

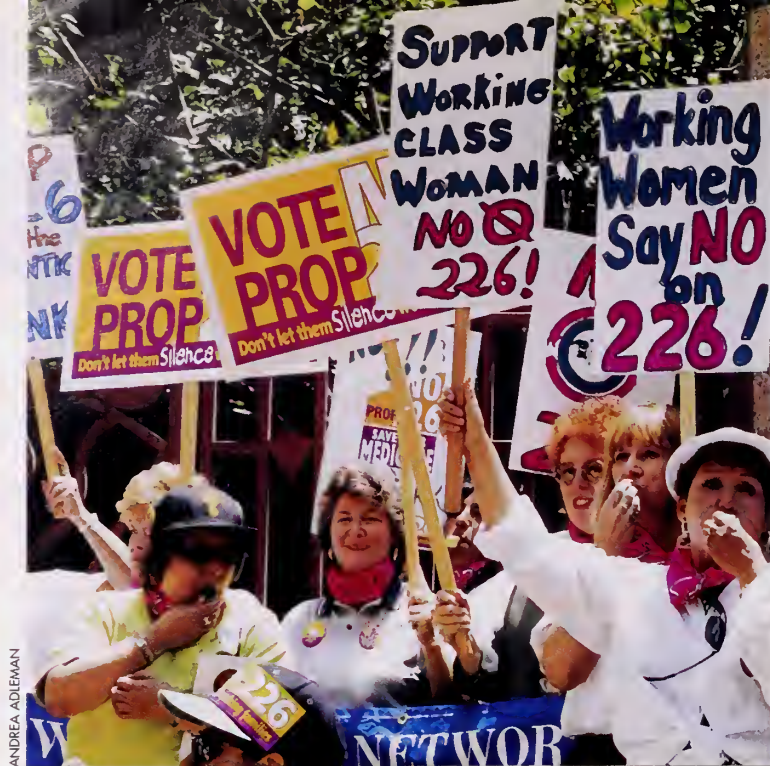
But working families fought back in 1998, and by building grassroots structures that last, are carrying on that momentum through this year in preparation for Labor 2000.

Proposition 226: Blueprint for victory

California's unions realized early in the fight against Prop. 226 that the most successful strategy to counter out-of-state paycheck deception forces is one-on-one contact with working families.

"We took the issue straight to our members, and our members mobilized in their workplaces and in their neighborhoods," says Food and Commercial Workers President Douglas Dority.

California's building trades unions trained members and



ANDREA ADLEMAN

Grassroots action: Through one-on-one contact with union members, working families scored a critical victory when they defeated California's Proposition 226 in June 1998.

encouraged them to meet one on one with colleagues at their worksites. Through their apprentice classes, the Carpenters and Painters and Allied Trades unions discussed with union members the relationship between politics and labor, while the Ironworkers recruited member activists in union hiring halls and the Sheet Metal Workers signed up volunteers from the union's retiree councils.

Central labor councils and the state federation worked with 1,300 locals in California, and in a two-month blitz of activity turned the tide on June 2, Election Day, and defeated Proposition 226 because:

- Volunteers made 650,000 phone calls to California voters explaining how Prop. 226 would silence their political voice.
- Activists walked 5,005 precincts, reaching more than 600,000 union members and their families.
- Workers visited 18,000 worksites to distribute the facts about 226.
- More than 3,500 volunteers mobilized at union halls, central labor councils and neighborhoods to get out the vote on Election Day.

Labor '98

Using the lessons learned from the Proposition 226 victory five months later, working families celebrated the stunning success of Labor '98.

As part of its effort to fulfill the 1997 resolution, the AFL-CIO established the National Labor Political Training Center, where more than 750 union volunteers have developed such member mobilization skills as coalition building, getting out the vote and recruiting political activists. Joining forces with local unions, central labor councils and state federations, the newly trained activists traveled nationwide in 1998 to key congressional districts. Their mission: Talk with union members.

That summer and fall, pundits predicted that the anti-worker GOP majority in the House and Senate would swell in November. But working families reduced the Big Business-backed majority in the House and defeated two longtime anti-working family senators. They did it by registering 1.2 million new voters and by generating a huge voter turnout: Twenty-three percent of those who voted in 1998 were from union households, according to Voter News Service exit polls and an NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll—even though union households account for just 17 percent of the voting population. Turnout also increased dramatically in minority communities, where unions worked with community groups on voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts.

"They've got the money, but we've got the people...and the power to elect people who will stand up for working families when it comes to Social Security, education, health care and good jobs. The 1998 elections usher in a new era of people-powered politics," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said, analyzing the big wins unions and working families scored through grassroots mobilization around the issues.

2000 in 2000

In the current Congress, 181 members are bankers or business people and 172 are lawyers. One in four members of Congress is a millionaire. Of the 9,736 people who have served in the U.S. House of Representatives since it was established in 1789, only 197 have been women; of the 1,851 people who have served as U.S. senators, only four have been African American. The makeup of state and local governments reflects working families only slightly better than Congress does.



BETTE LEE

2000 in 2000: As they campaign for office, union members such as Diane Rosenbaum (far right), who won a seat in the Oregon House of Representatives in 1998, boost voter turnout and generate excitement among working families in the electoral process.

To elect lawmakers who share the same concerns as working families about Social Security, Medicare, education, fair wages and a voice at work, the AFL-CIO and its unions launched the *2000 in 2000* initiative to identify and recruit 2,000 union members to run for public office in 2000.

In 1998, working family votes helped propel the first *2000 in 2000* candidates into office—420 of the 626 whom the federation identified as union members running for local, state and national office were elected. Around the country, 53 Fire Fighters who attended the union's academy for activists ran for office, and more than 40 were elected, while in Maryland, all 20 union member candidates were elected.

"No matter how much money we give politicians, there is nothing like having one of our own at the table," says Longshoremen Local 1408 member Tony Hill, a Florida state representative and secretary-treasurer of the Florida AFL-CIO.

Looking toward next year's critical elections, with the entire House, one-third of the Senate and the presidency at stake, along with governorships and state and local offices to be filled, the AFL-CIO's Labor 2000 swung into action this spring. Mobilizing earlier than ever before, with political coordinators already trained and in the field, *2000 in 2000* is on the move in primaries and off-year state and local elections. In Allegheny County, Pa., for example, the labor council's Working Families 2000 project helped AFT members Jeanne Brimmeier and Anthony Taliani, Electrical Worker Rich Schwartz and

Steelworker John DeFazio win their primary races for county council seats in May.

Labor 2000 membership mobilization will be based on the same successful one-on-one contact as in Labor '98: worksite visits, member-to-member contact, mailings and events. Local unions, central labor councils and state federations plan to expand the number of issue and candidate forums in 2000, making candidate questionnaires and question-and-answer sessions an integral part of the member education process.

Unions seek to top 1998's record registration effort with an aggressive outreach to find new voters in union households by Election Day 2000. In New Jersey, Communications Workers Local 1037 registered more than 1,600 union members in a spring voter registration drive as part of the New Jersey AFL-CIO Worker/Voter campaign. Multiply those 1,600 by thousands of local union drives around the country, add registration outreach efforts among community allies—civil rights, religious and women's groups—and the voice of working families will speak even louder on Election Day.

Working families have achieved notable political success in the past two years. Their activism has put lawmakers on notice they will be held accountable for their stands on working family issues and has helped define the nation's political agenda. ☐

One on one: Contacting union members through fliers, phone calls and worksite visits was the key to working families' unprecedented grassroots mobilization efforts in the 1998 elections.



BETTE LEE

The Organizing Institute Celebrating 10 Years of Union Building

TEN YEARS AGO, the unions of the AFL-CIO looked to the future and recognized the need to identify and train thousands of new union organizers to help workers win a voice on the job.

They created the Organizing Institute, which ran its first three-day training program in November 1989.

Today, 300 trainings later, the Organizing Institute is

stronger than ever, matching unions that are expanding their organizing programs with talented people who want to make a difference as part of a movement for change.

More than 2,000 Organizing Institute graduates have moved into leadership positions in hundreds of local unions across the country. Every month, new organizers are learning skills to make a difference for workers who want unions.

Pete Passarelli

organizing coordinator, USWA District 10
Organizing Institute, 1990

"The Organizing Institute was a very intense experience. It was a mix of rank-and-file workers, community organizers and students, and everyone brings something with them to the experience. The Organizing Institute really helped me refine my skills."



Cora Williams

international representative,
UAW Technical, Office and
Professional Department
Organizing Institute, 1993

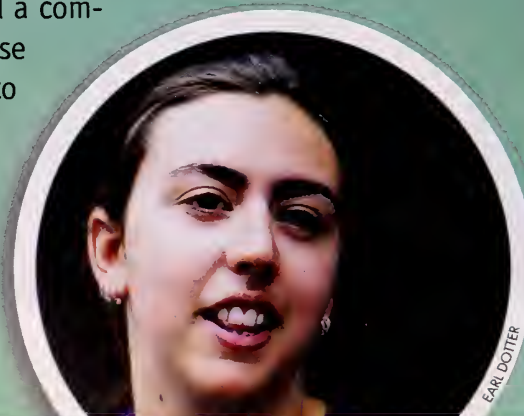
"The Organizing Institute has helped me look at organizing campaigns in a more systematic way. It showed me that there is a community of people trying to make a difference. I got to benefit from the experiences of other unions. I learned about what to expect from anti-union campaigns and how to talk through a plan with workers. It made all the difference in the world."



Erin Bowie

shop steward, Connecticut Union of Telephone Workers/CWA
Organizing Institute, 1999

"At the Organizing Institute, I was with 40 people who want to make a difference, from college students to 20-year Teamsters. I really felt like we all had a common bond. I'm going to use the techniques I learned to develop people we think are leaders and encourage them to take an active part. With my union, I know I'm doing something important that will benefit society."



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Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1999

America @work



Saying 'No' to the WTO

ALSO INSIDE:

Voice@Work

Highlights from the 1999 Convention

IDEAS AND VIEWS FROM YOU

"I READ WITH GREAT INTEREST the August article 'Talking Union to Your Kids.' I am a second-generation union member. One of my earliest memories is sitting on Santa's lap at my father's union hall. I knew then that unions had to be the way to go if Santa was involved. In college, I started one of the first AFT student chapters in the country.

"For my 3-year-old daughter and our twin daughters born this summer, the first song I sang to each one was 'Joe Hill,' and the first book I read was a child's book about labor unions. I hope that each of my daughters will be carrying union cards when they enter the workforce."—Thomas Hefner, president, AFT Local 2258, Greensboro, N.C.

Say What?

How has your union incorporated work-family needs into bargaining?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue.

America@work

815 16th St., N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20006

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Here's What You Say

ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION HAS USED E-MAIL, THE INTERNET OR OTHER COMPUTER-DRIVEN TECHNOLOGY TO ORGANIZE WORKERS:

"To see how the New Mexico Federation of Educational Employees is using the Internet to organize, please check out our new website at www.nmft.org. We have incorporated many of the sites suggested in the September issue of America@work article, 'Virtual Organizing,' on our Links page."—John Ingram, webmaster

"Lobbying by mass e-mail campaign has worked quite well here in Oregon, both at the state legislature level and for our congressional delegation."—A.S. "Beany" Kunis, research and education director, Oregon AFL-CIO, Salem

"[REGARDING 'TALKING UNION TO YOUR KIDS']

When I was 13 through 17, my dad was on strike and lockout. I always felt that every kid needed to go through that to really understand unions and what they stand for. I was on the picket line, in the strike shack, getting coffee donated for the strikers....There are many stories from back then that stick with me and have made me what I am today. The 44-month strike and lockout were won by the union. Everything they fought for, they won, including full back pay."—Rodney Breaux, PACE Local 4-447, Westwego, La.

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in America@work.

America@work

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and collective power
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that's when you see

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"THE AFL-CIO AND ITS AFFILIATED UNIONS should devote extra time, effort and money to ensure that...organizing efforts by IBM employees are successful. This, perhaps, is an opportunity, one in a lifetime, to start to take back America from the corporate greed-heads who now...control the economic fortunes of our country....The corporations have transformed our country into a system 'of the rich, by the rich and for the rich.' Our founding fathers had exactly the opposite type of society in mind. With solidarity, we can take back America."—Noel Myrick, IBM retiree, Tucson, Ariz.

"I ENJOY [AMERICA@WORK] VERY MUCH

and use excerpts of your articles....I read it cover to cover and find the articles helpful. I...stated in a meeting of the membership how important it was that we are an affiliate of the AFL-CIO...that all unions must work together for the common good because...we cannot win this fight alone. Also, I felt the amount of dues we pay is way too low; we pay on about one-third of our members. This is wrong."—Sue Yocum, Teamsters Local 79, Spring Hill, Fla.



4 CURRENTS

UAW pulls together for big auto parts victory

Teamsters stand strong against Overnite

Building trades members build bridges to community

22 OUT THERE

Union collectibles on the Web

Some people got nerve

Keeping cool and staying warm with union products

23 HOMEPAGE

Exhibit: "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: A History of American Sweatshops, 1820–Present"

Publication: *Walking the Lifelong Tightrope: Negotiating Work in the New Economy*

Video: *Global Village or Global Pillage?*

Music: *Ella Jenkins and a Union of Friends Pulling Together*

8

MAKING THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION WORK FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Tens of thousands of unionists, environmentalists and other activists from around the world marched and rallied in Seattle to deliver a strong message to WTO delegates: If the global economy doesn't work for working families, *it doesn't work*

12

UNION ACTIVISTS SING, DANCE AND ACT THEIR WAY TO CAMPAIGN VICTORIES

Through creative organizing—skits, songs and theater—union activists can reach workers who don't have much experience with unions, add energy to organizing campaigns and build worker unity

14

VOICE@WORK

Workers struggling to gain a voice at work are finding powerful new allies when they make their voices heard in their communities

17

BUILDING A VOICE FOR WORKING FAMILIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Nearly 1,000 delegates at the AFL-CIO's 23rd Biennial Convention in Los Angeles Oct. 11–13 agreed to form a New Alliance among central labor councils, state federations and the national AFL-CIO; approved a new union Internet community; voted to step up organizing efforts; and vowed to take back the U.S. House and elect a president who supports working families



17



High-road action: Teamsters protest NAFTA laws that will bring unregulated Mexican trucks to U.S. highways.

TEAMSTERS STAND STRONG IN NATIONWIDE STRIKE

Working families from across the country have backed Teamsters members who have been on strike since Oct. 24 against Overnite Trucking Co., which has fought the workers' efforts to get a voice at work.

Central labor councils and state federations in more than 24 cities mobilized members for a "day of action" Nov. 13 to support the strikers, who say Overnite has committed unfair labor practices—a charge

backed by the National Labor Relations Board which upheld an order to bargain in mid-November at four Overnite terminals when it found the company threatened workers. Unions have helped with picketing, rallies and coalition building throughout the strike, and the AFL-CIO donated \$100,000 to the IBT strike fund.

Even "volunteer" truckers from unrepresented terminals bolted off the job in Chicago after realizing they were "pawns in Overnite's game," Teamsters say.

"We had sought to avoid this strike," says IBT President James P. Hoffa. "But Overnite's unlawful conduct made it unavoidable. It is the bitter fruit of Overnite's unrepentant and unrelenting violation of the laws that protect America's working families." Thousands of the 8,200 dock workers and drivers at Overnite have joined the IBT at facilities nationwide. ☐

37,100 Teachers Join AFT in Puerto Rico Organizing Wave

Braving long lines at polling places in unseasonable tropical heat, more than 37,100 teachers in Puerto Rico chalked up a huge victory in November when an overwhelming majority of them voted to join AFT. Their vote for a voice at work catapulted the new Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico to the rank of second-largest AFT bargaining unit. "Teachers want a stronger voice in strengthening the quality of education in Puerto Rico," says Renan Soto Soto, president of the Fed-

eración. "Now we can begin to negotiate for the things that make schools work."

The win heralds a promising start to a massive organizing campaign in the wake of a 1998 union-supported law legalizing collective bargaining rights among the island's 150,000 public employees. Preliminary results indicate that 10,000 school cafeteria workers voted to join UAW, and elections are pending among other public employees seeking to join SEIU, AFSCME and Food and Commercial Workers. ☐

Dozens of Union Members Elected Nov. 2

The new mayors of Manchester, N.H., Moreland Hills, Ohio, and Ansonia, Conn., not only are strong supporters of working family issues—they're union members. Teamsters Local 633 member Bob Baines in Manchester, Communications Workers Local 4340 member Chuck DeGross in Moreland Hills and SEIU Local 511 member Jim DellaVolpe in Ansonia were among dozens of union members elected to public office Nov. 2 as part of the AFL-CIO 2000 in 2000 campaign.

In New York, 52 union members gained office, and in New Jersey, 24 of the 37 union member-candidates endorsed by the state AFL-CIO were

elected. President Charles Wowkanek says the New Jersey federation's WORKER/VOTER program registered 81,000 union members to vote, and thousands of union members took part in get-out-the-vote actions through phone banks, home visits and literature distribution.

The Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor mobilized union members who helped send 21 of 30 of their union colleagues into office, including DeGross, whose campaign was supported by community allies, says Executive Secretary John Ryan.

Jack Shea, president of the Allegheny County (Pa.) Labor Council, reports that four of the six union member-candidates running for county council seats won their bids, as working families mobilized around the CLC's Working Families 2000 GOTV initiative. ☐

UAW Scores Wins With Big 3

After signing a pattern agreement with DaimlerChrysler, the UAW rapidly negotiated new contracts at General Motors and Ford that provide pay raises and protections for workers at divisions that are being spun off.

Workers ratified four-year contracts with the Big Three automakers that include a \$1,350 up-front bonus and 3 percent wage increases each year. The pacts at GM and DaimlerChrysler contain job security clauses that strengthen requirements to hire new workers as a result of attrition and outsourcing.

A key union goal was to protect the employees of Ford's Visteon division, which the company plans to spin off, and GM's Delphi Automotive Systems, which became independent this year. Under the national agreements, Visteon and Delphi workers will have contracts identical to those at Ford and GM, respectively, for the current and two subsequent contracts.

"They can spin off the plants, but they can't spin off the people," said UAW President Stephen Yokich.

Unique to the Ford pact are Family Service and Learning Centers that will be set up near all Ford facilities. The centers, which will be run jointly by a worker-management board, will make it easier to obtain family, educational and community services, including on-site child care.

The new contracts cover some 366,000 workers and expire Sept. 14, 2003. ☐

Avondale Workers Win Their Fight for a Union

After a six-year struggle, the 4,100 workers at Avondale shipyard in New Orleans won their fight for a voice at work. On Nov. 30, an independent arbitrator certified that a majority of workers had signed petitions in

favor of union representation. Over the summer, Avondale was bought by Litton Industries—a shipyard with a positive relationship with its unions and workers—and management signed a neutrality agreement with the AFL-

CIO Metal Trades Department giving organizers one year to collect the required number of signatures. The workers wanted a voice on the job so much that a majority signed up in less than 10 days. “I have

been waiting so long to hear the words, ‘You’re in,’” says Francis Lewis, a small tool helper at the shipyard. “Now we can start negotiating on health and safety issues so we don’t have so many accidents and deaths.” ☐

SPOTLIGHT

UAW Pulls Together for Big Auto Parts Victory

Management at Mexican Industries, a group of auto-parts makers in Detroit, thought employees would work harder if they didn’t have any chairs to sit on while assembling seat covers.

Instead, the mostly Latina workforce sought a voice at work and organized a union, with 58 percent of the 1,100 workers in four bargaining units voting to join the UAW in October. As part of the campaign, UAW leaders mobilized 50 Spanish-speaking organizers—staff and member-volunteers—from all over the country. Their efforts included a house-call blitz that reached 800 workers. Union leaders say Mexican Industries, which operates six parts plants and three joint ventures, met the workers’ campaign for justice with tactics aimed at spreading fear and intimidation, including threats that auto parts suppliers would not buy from Mexican Industries if the workers voted for the union. To combat management’s ploy, organizers brought together leaders of UAW locals from the plants that use Mexican Industries’ products, who rallied in support of the workers, assuring them that union members would support them.

“Because they saw the support they had, and knowing they had backing from UAW members, it gave them a little more confidence,” says Gloria Martin Ramirez, a UAW organizer who worked at a Ford plant in Dearborn, Mich. “It also affirmed the fact that the company was giving them misinformation.”

“It is an honor to have Mexican Industries workers join our ranks,” UAW President Stephen Yokich said. “They worked long and hard to create this opportunity to bargain collectively for their families and to make Mexican Industries a better company for everyone, including its workers and its customers.” ☐



The mostly Latina workforce at Mexican Industries fought back against anti-union tactics and won a voice at work with the UAW.

Walking for a cure: More than 3,000 union members and others joined in the Massachusetts AFL-CIO’s first annual Walk to Cure Cancer.



Strides Toward a Cancer Cure

The Massachusetts AFL-CIO is taking a big step toward defeating cancer by pledging to help raise \$5 million over the next five years to expand the University of Massachusetts Cancer Center. As part of that effort, more than 3,000 union members and others joined in the state federation’s first annual Walk to Cure Cancer, a five-mile trek around Lake Quinsigamond in Worcester.

The Labor Day event raised \$300,000 and drew such walkers as George Tremblay, a mail handler who was diagnosed in June with terminal brain cancer. The 46-year-old Mail Handlers Local 301 member raised \$1,250 from 180 of his colleagues at a postal distribution center. (The Mail Handlers is a division of the Laborers.)

“We were overwhelmed by the turnout,” says Bob Haynes, president of the state AFL-CIO, which lost two vice presidents and a former president to cancer over the summer: vice presidents Francis Toland of the Utility Workers and Chuck McDevitt of the UAW and former state federation President Richard Leblanc of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union/UFCW. ☐

Building Schools

Tipper Gore learns how to “butter” a brick from Claudine Howard, an apprentice with Bricklayers Local 1 in New Haven, Conn. Gore was in New Haven at West Cross High School in October to support efforts by building and construction trades unions and AFT to gain passage of the Public School Modernization Act, which would provide \$3.2 billion in federal tax credits to repair, modernize and build our nation’s public schools. ☐



Building Trades Members Build Bridges to Community

Making life better for their neighbors is what gives many building trades members a sense of accomplishment. Charles Jones, Steve Schneider and 137 other members of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 449 help out the Pittsburgh community through the UA's Project Heat's On, spending Saturdays checking and repairing heating systems for homeowners who are either elderly or have special needs.

The joint labor-management program, which began in Denver in 1985, has spread to about 40 cities nationwide.

Elizabeth Grizzle was grateful for the help. "Just think, you guys might have saved my life—literally," she told Schneider and Jones, according to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, after they found and replaced a defective safety switch that would not shut down her furnace when it got too hot and could have started a fire.

"It's just our way of giving back to the communities where we live. When there is a need, union members are always willing to help," says Dennis Cole, UA special representative.

In Monroe County, Mich., volunteers from the building trades recently helped make life easier for four households with physically challenged family members by building barrier-free access ramps at their homes. In the 10 years since Project Ramp began, the volunteers have constructed 100 ramps and the program has received numerous awards.

"This year's project, like every year, is a special privilege of ours to again have the ability to contribute to the quality of life of these residents," says Walter Mabry, executive secretary-treasurer of the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters.

If you have more examples of union members helping out in the community, please call James Parks, 202-637-5022; e-mail: jparks@afclcio.org.

ROBERT PAUCHAK/PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE



A helping hand: Elizabeth Grizzle (left) looks on as Steve Schneider and Charles Jones, members of Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Local 449, inspect the furnace in her Pittsburgh-area home.

Fire Fighters Seek FEDERAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING BILL

The Fire Fighters union has been working hard to pass the federal Public Safety Employer-Employee Act, which would extend to firefighters and police officers the right to negotiate wages, hours and working conditions, includ-

ing those that affect their personal safety. As part of the union's effort, the IAFF has successfully countered the National Right to Work Committee's attempt to defeat the legislation, which included a nationwide fear-mongering campaign.

The legislation recently gained bipartisan majority sponsorship in the U.S. House of Representatives and the committees and subcommit-

N.C. TEXTILE WORKERS CLEAR FINAL HURDLE

The new UNITE members at the Kannapolis, N.C., Fieldcrest Cannon textile plants will get some rest in their 25-year struggle now that the company's management has decided to drop challenges to their recent organizing victory. "Both [parent company] Pillowtex and UNITE have agreed that it is counter-productive to continue further litigation on the questions of challenged ballots from the June election," reads a Nov. 10 joint statement from company CEO Chuck Hansen and Bruce Raynor, secretary-treasurer of UNITE. Contract negotiations are set to begin shortly for the nearly 5,000 Fieldcrest Cannon workers in Kannapolis and four other locations in the South. ☐

Letter Carriers Honor Heroes

"They would have killed me if she hadn't come along," recalls 74-year-old Joseph Klein, describing the day in November 1998 when two dogs—a pit bull and a Rhodesian ridgeback—knocked him down and bit him more than a dozen times before Letter Carrier Donna Cutler saved him.

Cutler was honored Sept. 14 as "Hero of the Year" by her union, NALC, for saving Klein's life when she grabbed a mail tray and began swinging at the dogs, who then turned on her. She escaped unharmed. The 13-year veteran is a member of Massachusetts Northeast Merged Branch 25.

NALC also honored three

other letter carriers as "Regional Heroes of the Year," and awarded the Yonkers, N.Y., Branch 387 with NALC's Branch Service Award. Its members have assisted the Richmond Children's Center and its 130 physically and mentally challenged children since 1995, providing clothing, contributions and a Santa Claus. ☐



LORRAINE SWERDLOFF/NALC

Special delivery
Letter Carrier Donna Cutler was named NALC Hero of the Year.

Beverly Farm Strike SUCCESSFUL

Following a four-month strike, AFSCME Council 31 members at Beverly Farm, a residential home for developmentally disabled adults in Godfrey, Ill., are back on the job with an 11 percent average pay increase, better health insurance and overtime benefits and a forum to discuss improving care for residents. The 350 workers voted for a voice on the job in 1994, but management waged a five-year war, including withdrawing recognition of the union. In an unprecedented action, the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago in November ordered Beverly Farm to bargain with the union. ☐

tees with jurisdiction, and the IAFF is working with the congressional leadership to schedule votes.

IAFF President Al Whitehead notes that the committee's previous efforts to curtail workers' rights have failed. "As a result," he says, "they're on the defensive, and they're using the bogus threat of firefighter and police strikes in a cynical attempt to raise funds." ☐

Pension Trustees Discuss Activist Role

Union pension fund administrators and trustees must move beyond proxy voting and begin to deliver value for their beneficiaries and help working families and their communities. The clear message was part of the Funds@ Work Forum that drew more than 300 pension fund trustees, fund administrators, international union staff, bankers and attorneys to Orlando, Fla., Nov. 3 to discuss ways in which worker-owners can use their assets for high-road investing and more activist ownership.

"The most urgent issue facing union pension funds is how to recruit more activist trustees who see corporate ownership as a way to provide a secure pension for their members and to help working families and

their communities, such as in assisting in organizing campaigns. These are complementary roles," says UNITE Vice President Noel Beasley.

In recent years, worker-owners have used their assets to help the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees elect independent directors at Santa Fe Gaming.

In the past few years, the AFL-CIO has intensified its efforts to promote pro-worker pension investment policies through the capital stewardship program, which works to promote worker-owner interests.

The forum, sponsored by the AFL-CIO and the Center for Working Capital, also highlighted the recent launching of the center's Investment Product Review, an evaluation of 46 investment options that say they follow a worker-friendly strategy.

Copies of the report are available from the Office of Investment, 202-637-3900. ☐

OUT FRONT

The 23rd AFL-CIO Biennial Convention gave today's unions many of the tools we will need to build a stronger union movement and a better life for working families.

We built strategies for rebuilding the union movement at the local level, bridging the "digital divide" by improving working families' access to 21st century technology and giving working families a stronger voice on the job, in politics—and even in their charitable giving.

As proud as I am of those important steps, I am prouder still that we took them together.

As many of you know, that wasn't always easy. As the leaders and activists of the most dynamic union movement in the world, we represent diverse interests—working people in vastly different industries, income levels, age groups, geographic regions, genders, races and ethnicities, sexual orientations—each with specific agendas and concerns.

Through every moment of the convention, and the crucial months leading up to it, I believe we remained true to the array of workers who make up our rainbow union movement. We brought their individual voices forward by conducting a convention that included more rank-and-file members than ever before, celebrating great improvements in the lives of individual working women and men and showing that we truly are a movement of and for working people. We showed that we are hard at work for our *real* bosses—each of the 13 million union members who have chosen us to represent them.

We also succeeded—together—in finding the common denominators that will serve *every* working American family well and in strengthening the common threads among us that bind the tapestry of our diversity.

That took incredible courage and commitment.

We worked through these decisions with immense respect for one another and the willingness to listen to and hear one another—and the willingness to hear and accept our differences while knowing we would not allow them to divide us.

As we continue to grow and become stronger, our challenges on many fronts will grow as well. I hope that each time we face difficult decisions together, we will build on the spirit of this convention, respect our individual concerns and step forward together for progress as a movement.

Together, we are even more than the sum of our parts.

Together, with the strength and solidarity we demonstrated at the 1999 convention, there is no doubt in my mind that we *will* win good jobs, strong communities and a voice for working families. ☐

Stronger Together



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

BILL BURKE / PAGE ONE

REMEMBERING KAREN SILKWOOD

It was 25 years ago on Nov. 13 that union activist Karen Silkwood's car mysteriously veered off the road while she was on her way to deliver chilling evidence to an investigative reporter that her employer, plutonium processor Kerr-McGee in Cimarron, Okla., endangered workers' health and safety by allowing radiation hazards at the plant. Silkwood had uncovered the conditions during her efforts to prevent the company from decertifying her union, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Local 5-283. To mark the anniversary, PACE International Union (OCAW's successor), the Mine Workers, SEIU and other organizations will hold an event Dec. 17 to retell the story. Actress Meryl Streep, who portrayed Silkwood in a 1983 film, is scheduled to attend.

A quarter-century later, PACE workers are documenting the same types of hazards at other plants that Silkwood found at Kerr-McGee. U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Bill Richardson proposed funds to compensate workers who have gotten cancer as a result of radioactive exposure at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant in Kentucky, one of several plants where safety problems have been discovered. "These workers, who served our nation as veterans of the Cold War production era, must not be forgotten," says Jim Key, a member of PACE Local 5-550 who has worked for 25 years at the Paducah plant. Key testified at a congressional hearing in September, just weeks after documents from workers' lawsuits against the former operators of the plant were made public. ☐

Making the World Trade Organization Work for Working



USWA President George Becker, TWU President Sonny Hall, AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, IBT President James P. Hoffa and UAW President Stephen Yokich protest in Seattle.

By the hundreds and thousands, union members and their allies streamed into Seattle with a critical mission: To make the Nov. 29-Dec. 3 World Trade Organization meeting the historic beginning of a new era, one in which the world's trade rules no longer are devised by high-ranking government

BY DAVID KAMERAS

officials working at the behest of multinational corporations behind closed doors.

At the end of the week, the unprecedented coalition had reached its goal.

On Dec. 3, WTO talks concluded in disarray, with member countries unable to arrive at any agreements—or even issue a final statement. The breakdown in talks “reflects the first step in a serious coming to terms with pivotal issues—accountability, democratic procedures, workers’ and human rights and the environment—that protesters highlighted all week,” says AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. “It signals the beginning of a new era that recognizes the urgent need to construct a trading system that can face the challenges of the 21st century.”

Tens of thousands of union members, students, community activists, farmers, religious leaders and environmentalists marched and rallied in Seattle to deliver a strong message to WTO delegates: If the global economy doesn't work for working families, it doesn't work.





Saving sea turtles: Adelaide Chen of Oakland, Calif., protests the treatment of animals under the WTO's policies.

BETH KAISER/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Union members who took part in the rally agree. Mary Fleure, who lost two jobs in the past three years at manufacturing plants that shut down or moved work overseas, says the companies were making money—but wanted more. Her employer said that with global competition, “workers would have to compete with the 30 cents an hour” paid in other countries, where workers’ right to organize to lift their standards is denied.

Even State Laws are Superseded by WTO Rules

Here’s what it means when World Trade Organization rules don’t incorporate basic workers’ rights:

Each year in France, at least 2,000 workers die of asbestos-related cancer. Yet a law to ban all forms of asbestos there has been challenged as a violation of the WTO’s trade accords.

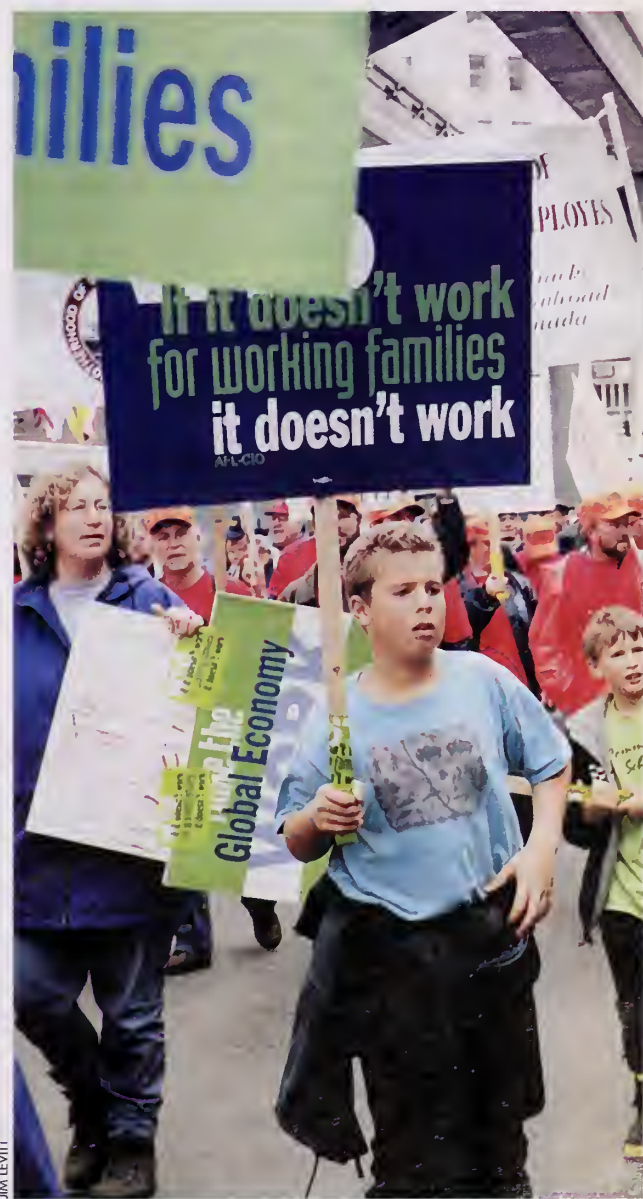
When Massachusetts voters passed a referendum in 1998 to ban state procurement from companies doing business with the slave labor regime of Burma, a state court ruled that the action would run afoul of the WTO. @

Families

While Fleure was at the rally, she saw a group of protesters bring in several black coffins, one of them marked “Workers.” It reminded Fleure of Ralph Hale, a co-worker who died of a heart attack after his plant was shut down, and she burst into tears. “I was overwhelmed,” she says. “So many times you hear people say that nobody cares. People from all over the world should see this, because you have the young, the old, people in wheelchairs, different ethnic groups, all with one goal: to tell the WTO we’ve had enough of their trade policies.”

As protesters rallied in Seattle, the public began to understand that the issues at stake are not just about trade, but about the effects of globalization.

“I believe it’s important to be here because working people around the world should unite. Corporations are growing stronger and stronger,” says Louis Rocha, president of Communications Workers Local 9423 in San Jose, Calif. As Stewart Acuff, president of the Atlanta Labor Council, says: “The real story on Tuesday, November 30 was of disciplined, well-trained student activists who took over



JIM LEVITT

Family affair: Union members and their families demand that global trade agreements include such workers’ rights as freedom from child labor.

streets and intersections and 40,000 marching, occasionally dancing trade unionists, environmentalists and activists whose outrage at the WTO and corporate greed and newfound respect and affection for each other created a tangible human energy that built with the growing awareness that we had stopped the machine for a day."

A global demand for justice

As union members traveled from around the world to Seattle, some 135 trade ministers and heads of state, including President Bill Clinton, took part in the WTO's first-ever U.S. meeting. Many international unions held their executive board meetings in conjunction with the WTO meeting. Some 25 state AFL-CIOs and dozens of central labor councils sent delegations to protest. A special AFL-CIO/WTO train carried into town hundreds of WTO protesters from Portland, Ore. Union members chartered hundreds buses from throughout the Northwest and British Columbia.

"We're here to show solidarity with working families here and around the world," Dee-Dee Zarzecki, a member of Machinists Local 1103 in Seattle, said as she took part in the rally. "We're making our voices heard for fair trade policies and workers' rights everywhere."

The union movement built on its strong ties with the religious community, strengthening the struggle for human and workers' rights that has united diverse groups of activists. The Washington Association of Churches sponsored a prayer service, interfaith gathering, procession and "human chain" around the Exhibition Center, site of the WTO opening gala. "A lot of the WTO's decisions have been destructive to local communities and the environment," says Rev. Ron Moe-Lobeda, who publicized the Seattle events at University Lutheran Church. "People of faith have stepped forward to protest."

AFL-CIO affiliates and coalition partners were key to meeting the challenges of accommodating nearly 40,000 protesters and coordinating the events. Communications Workers volunteered to help workers get their message out to the world. Some 900 members of the Washington State Association of Machinists served as marshals, with captains and coordinators keeping the march peaceful and orderly. In a demonstration of solidarity, the Longshore and Warehouse



Public Supports Workers' Rights in Trade Agreements

When nearly 40,000 union members and their allies marched through the Seattle streets in November, they had public opinion on their side.

While most Americans generally support increased trade, nearly two-thirds say they agree that "when the World Trade Organization makes decisions, it tends to think about what's best for business, but not about what's best for the world as a whole."

University of Maryland poll, conducted in October, found that substantial majorities say that trade growth has widened the gap between American rich and poor (56 percent), and that U.S. trade officials pay too little attention to working Americans (72 percent).

Fully 93 percent of respondents say "countries that are part of international trade agreements should be required to maintain minimum standards for working conditions." Some 74 percent say countries that allow subminimum standards enjoy an unfair competitive advantage, and 83 percent say subjecting workers to harsh and unsafe conditions is immoral.

The public also clearly supports limiting trade with countries that violate international human rights standards: 81 percent cited Iran, 77 percent, Burma, and 75 percent, China.

The wage gap is reflected in the public's response to international trade. A recent Pew Research Center survey found that while 63 percent of families earning \$75,000 and above feel positive about globalization, only 37 percent of those earning less than \$50,000 agree. ☐

Union shut down the Port of Seattle and dozens of ports along the West Coast Nov. 30. Food and Commercial Workers District 17 purchased 100 parking spaces at Safeco Field for carpools and hired three flatbed trucks to bring in hundreds of its members to the rally. SEIU hooked up its "Big MAC" (Mobile Action Center), a purple semi-trailer, to Seattle phone lines so staff could call union members to build turnout. SEIU District 1199NW provided standby medical units of doctors and interns, augmenting the emergency services arranged with the city. Union staff members mailed 35,000 postcards to Seattle-area unionists to remind them to attend the events.

For weeks before the event, billboards and ads posted by the AFL-CIO, the Steelworkers and 13 other groups appeared throughout the area, calling attention to abuses of workers' rights and the loss of manufacturing jobs. The National Council of Senior Citizens and the Puget Sound Council of Senior Citizens aggressively recruited union retirees to attend. The city of Seattle changed the name of Pine Street, one of the key legs of the march route through downtown, to Union Way for the day. Mayor Paul Schell and King County Executive Ron Sims allowed county and city nonessential employees to take Nov. 30 off to participate in the rally and march. The Sierra Club organized 4,000 protesters, and the Tibetan Rights Campaign demonstrated against the inclusion of China in the WTO.

"We came from different unions, different countries and different races, but we spoke with one voice. I felt proud to be part of the labor movement," says Liz Brown of the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild, TNG-CWA Local 37082.

Broken promises

The international commitment to respecting workers' rights and the environment so far has been largely rhetorical. Under current WTO rules, it's easier to punish a country for violating patent laws than for sending children to work—more than 250 million children toil worldwide—instead of going to school. The WTO and the corporations shaping the global economy established a system that encourages companies to search the globe for the lowest possible labor costs and the weakest environmental safeguards. Often, they get help from undemocratic governments that

Stopping China's Entry into the WTO

In 1995, Huffy Corp. in Celina, Ohio, slashed its workforce to 1,100. USWA Local 5369 President John Folk and 2,300 other workers who built bicycles for Huffy thought the company's corporate slashing would save the plant. But just before Christmas 1998, management completely shut down the profitable operation, moved some production to a less efficient plant in Mexico and boosted imports from China. "The damage has been done for me and my brothers and sisters," Folk says. "We can't be saved. But we can heighten awareness so more people speak out." Folk was one of the tens of thousands of activists who marched in Seattle.

Union members opposed to the admission to the WTO of any nation that is not in compliance with core workers' rights plan to wage a vigorous campaign against U.S. efforts to grant permanent "normal trade relations" status to China.

To take part in the campaign, call members of Congress at 1-877-722-7494 and tell them that the world's largest human rights violator must stop abusing workers' rights before it is allowed in the world's marketplace. ☐

"compete" in the global marketplace by refusing to protect their citizens from workplace abuse and environmental degradation and by suppressing workers' efforts to improve their living standards and quality of life.

The growing power of multinational corporations has weakened the bargaining strength and eroded the living standards of workers everywhere, while increasing financial instability and inequality. In sub-Saharan Africa and many of the world's poorest countries, per capita income is lower today than it was in 1970. Here at home, so-called free trade policies and the North American Free Trade Agreement have destroyed hundreds of thousands of jobs and crippled working families. Throughout the world, workers who try to join together to improve their conditions face persecution, with more than 1,000 trade unionists killed last year, thousands more imprisoned and tens of thousands fired from their jobs.

While the WTO does not write trade laws, it sets guidelines to which its 135 member countries must conform to avoid trade retaliation. If a country accuses another of unfairly restricting trade, dispute settlement panels composed of "trade experts," often trade lawyers or diplomats with questionable knowledge of worker and environmental issues, decide the case. If the complaint is upheld, the defending country must change its laws or policies to conform with WTO rules or face losing its trade privileges.

The WTO says that environmental and public health measures should be the "least trade restrictive"

possible—that is, the free flow of goods takes precedence over social objectives. Because work other than prison labor is not included in WTO rules, countries may not withdraw trade preferences from WTO members, even for appalling violations of workers' rights.

Current U.S. trade policies not only pit American workers and job-seekers against those in developing countries—they reward governments and corporations that abuse workers' rights. One example is the administration's recent trade deal with China, which smooths the way for the world's largest rights violator to join the WTO. "China's entry into the WTO is less likely to reform China than to further deform the WTO," Sweeney says. The WTO's acceptance of China would signal that rampant worker and human rights violations have no relevance to "business as



One voice: The vocal group Sweet Honey in the Rock performed at an interfaith gathering in Seattle.

usual" as conducted by multinational corporations, many of them American.

Union, environmental, human rights and other activists are working together for a fairer system—to build solidarity around progressive, pro-worker, pro-environment, pro-community economic policies reflecting internationally recognized core workers' rights that would include prohibitions against child labor, slave labor, discrimination and the freedom to join together with others in a union.

"We have to make a stand against the WTO's corporate leaders, and we have to get our members better educated about why this is important," says Maureen Bo, business manager of Office and Professional Employees Local 8 in Seattle. "This will be the beginning of a long, long campaign on both of these fronts." ☐

Honoring an International Champion of Workers' Rights

The World Trade Organization's ministerial meeting coincided with the 50th anniversary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, which also met in Seattle. Created after trade unions played a key role in defeating fascism during World War II, the ICFTU has ensured the continued influence of freely organized workers.

The ICFTU has championed the interests of working families worldwide by supporting development of a strong, independent black trade union movement in apartheid-era South Africa, fighting dictatorships in Latin America, Europe and Asia and leading the struggle against child labor.

During the anniversary celebration, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney presented the ICFTU with the George Meany-Lane Kirkland Award, which honors individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions to human rights.

ICFTU delegates called on the WTO ministers meeting in Seattle to prepare a set of recommendations to achieve respect for workers' rights within the





UNION ACT Dance WAY TO C

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI



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EARL DOTTER

With only three weeks to go before a union election at two Venture auto parts plants in Michigan, UAW Local 651 member-organizer Jeri Cooper knew she needed to maintain momentum and keep up workers' spirits.

So, the Delphi parts assembler decided to attend the Conference on Creative Organizing this summer at the George Meany Center/National Labor College in Silver Spring, Md. At the three-day interactive symposium

in July, Cooper and other union activists swapped strategies for using humor, skits, songs and theater to boost organizing efforts. The conference grew out of the Labor Heritage Foundation's long-running

annual arts exchange program designed for performers. Two years ago, sponsors realized many organizers also wanted an opportunity to explore the arts as a union-building tool. Skits, songs and theater that play off a company's logo, slogan or theme song and tap into pop culture references can augment traditional organizing strategies, offer novel ways to reach workers who don't have much experience with unions, add energy to organizing campaigns and

build workers' unity, says Peter Jones, executive director of the foundation.

"Organizing campaigns are often about dignity, solidarity and social justice," says Jones. "Creative techniques help people showcase these aspects. They also help educate people, build morale and bring people together."

Singing the way to organizing victory

On the last day of the conference, a group of creative activists huddled with Cooper to brainstorm creative solutions to real-life dilemmas. When Cooper discussed the safety problems at the plant related to

ISTS Sing, ND Act THEIR PAIGN VICTORIES

chemicals oozing through the floor, the group wrote a spoof of the opening theme song from the 1960s sitcom, "The Beverly Hillbillies":

"The next thing you know, we're gettin' mighty ill.

With our poor health care, guess who paid the bill?"

"The guys are going to love this," Cooper beamed. And they did. Copies of the song sheet quickly found their way around the plant. "They had fun with it," Cooper says. "People really perk up when you give them a new poster or a song." On Aug. 5, the 600 workers at the Venture auto parts plants voted to join UAW Local 524 by a 2-to-1 margin, and now have a voice on the job to improve safety conditions.

Skits, costumes and games

Conference presenter Chris Briker, a former clown with the Ringling Brothers and

Barnum & Bailey Circus, showed participants how he now uses his skills as a member of Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 30 in San Diego. Briker demonstrated a hat juggling technique that can be used to illustrate that workers are under pressure to "juggle" too many responsibilities on the job, such as in the case of teachers who get assigned rest room monitor and cafeteria duties.



Riveting: Talking frogs from a popular television commercial put color in creative skits.

EARL DOTTER

Similar skits can be performed at rallies and general meetings, and in lunchrooms and parking lots during shift changes. Leaders at SEIU District 1199/WO created a life-size board game with a pair of giant dice to train others how to make organizing house calls. And during a campaign for a fair contract at Coca-Cola subsidiary Minute Maid in Florida, Teamsters Local 444 organizers spoofed the soft-drink's theme song, "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing," by changing the lyrics to:

"We'd like to work at Minute Maid in peace and harmony

With no barbed wire or guns for hire, no armed security."

Other ideas union organizers can use to energize campaigns include:

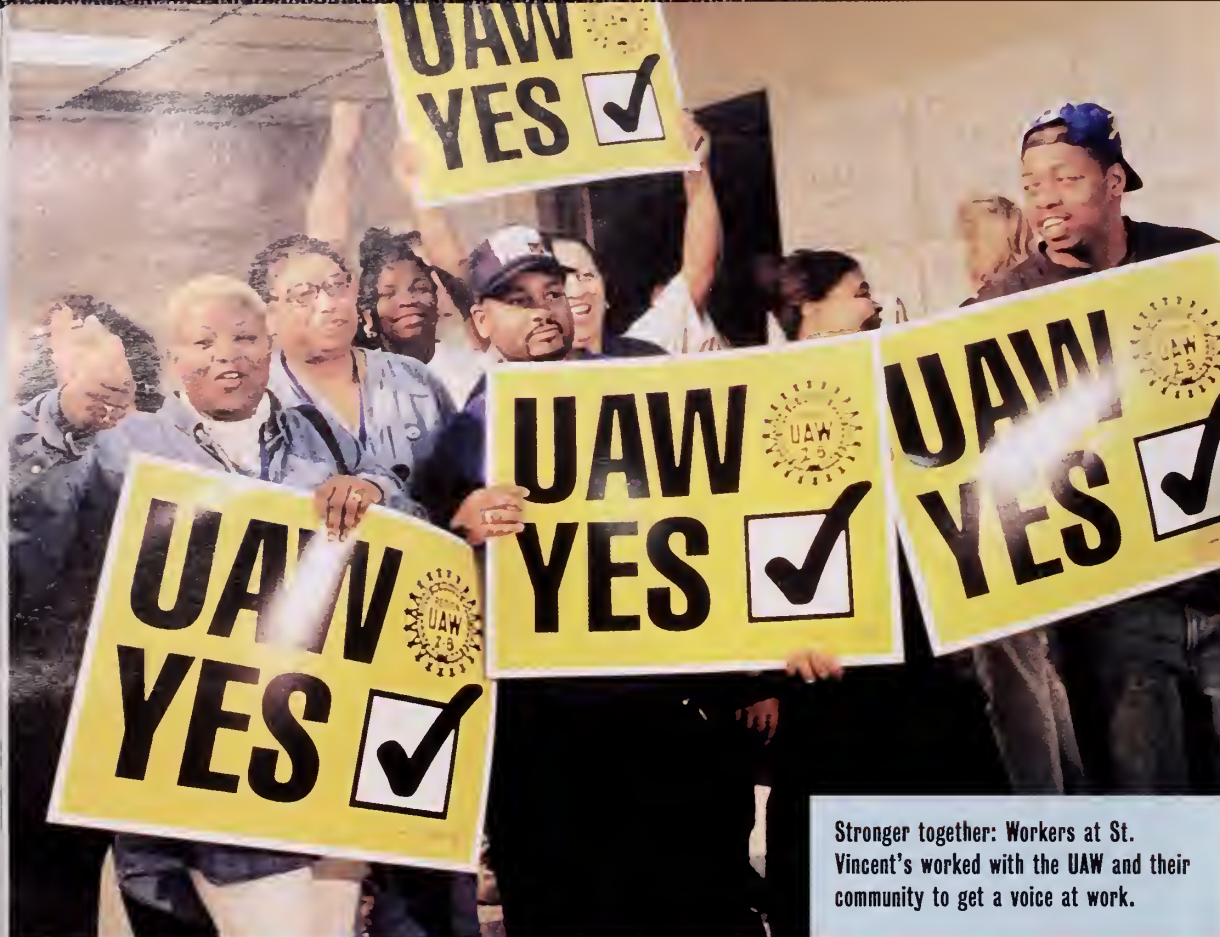
- A "lie-o-meter" skit, in which workers ask the "boss" questions, with answers becoming increasingly preposterous. The needle on the "lie-o-meter" can point to white lie, fib, lyin' king, not!, bald-faced lie or whopper.

- Game show spoofs such as "Your Job's in Jeopardy," and "The Price is Wrong" that feature management and union teams. When answering "Name something that can protect you on your job," the management team would answer incorrectly if it guessed "a pit bull," while the union team would get points for answering "a union contract."

- Characters in costumes such as "Contractula" (a vampire with a cape), "Boss-zilla" (a lizard mask and claws), or skeletons to illustrate "bare bones" contract offers.

"When people sing together or perform a skit together," says Jones, "it builds unity"—a crucial component in organizing campaigns. "It also builds leadership. If people can sing in front of a group, they can speak in front of a group. If they can do a skit, they can do role-playing better. Creative techniques help people think about different ways of doing things."

For more information on Creative Organizing conferences, contact the Labor Heritage Foundation, 202-842-7810, or the George Meany Center for Labor Studies, 301-431-6400; e-mail: info@georgemeany.org; website: www.georgemeany.org.



Stronger together: Workers at St. Vincent's worked with the UAW and their community to get a voice at work.

JETTA FRASER

Maki

Workers struggling to gain a voice at work are finding powerful new allies when they make their voices heard in their communities

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

When no one is watching, employers feel free to harass, intimidate, even fire workers trying to exercise their freedom to choose a voice at work. But when those workers enlist local union members, clergy, community groups and local elected leaders, they have a better chance to win their struggle in shining a light on the boss's behavior. The following three examples highlight successful campaigns by workers to involve their communities in the fight to overcome employer interference and win union membership.

CASE STUDY 1

Political action and a strong union base

When Princess Bryson, a certified surgery technician at St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center, was pregnant, she says her supervisor would not allow her to take a bathroom break. For years, the nearly 2,700 nurses, technicians and clerical workers at the Toledo, Ohio, hospital experienced dozens of similar examples of disrespect on the job. Their victorious union organizing campaign to join UAW in October means they now have a voice to improve their working conditions and ensure quality patient care. But to get a voice at work, the workers made sure their community and political leaders heard their voices first.

With a large number of union members in Toledo, many St. Vincent's workers have relatives who are union members and know firsthand the benefits of joining together for a voice on the job. Building on that base, the central labor council spearheaded a program in which locals called their members and encouraged them to talk to their relatives at St. Vincent's about joining the union. "The St. Vincent's workers were impressed that someone from another union altogether was calling

VOICE@WORK

The AFL-CIO's Voice@Work campaign aims to help workers join with their communities to put an end to employer attacks and make sure their efforts to join a union are respected. The campaign kicked off with a weeklong series of events, *7 Days in June*, during which more than 12,000 working people, community leaders and elected officials participated in more than 120 events in 100-plus cities.

Our Voices Heard

them," says Toledo Area AFL-CIO Council Executive Secretary Ron Coughenour.

The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, an AFL-CIO constituency group, furthered the efforts at one-on-one contact by asking each CBTU member to stay in contact with one St. Vincent's worker. "We'd share words of encouragement," says Cenia Willis, president of the Toledo CBTU chapter and a member of AFSCME/Ohio Council 8. CBTU had used this technique successfully during AFSCME's Ohio Council 8's campaign to organize Head Start workers in early 1998. The campaign also gained the support of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, which helped get the word out to its constituents.

A key component of the organizing effort also involved tapping into the city's strong union political presence—three out of the 12 Toledo city council representatives also are union members. "Politics is one of our main ingredients," says Coughenour. "Our members vote." So when a resolution supporting the St. Vincent's workers' right to organize came up for a vote, the city council passed it unanimously. (The Lucas County Commission, which governs Toledo and has one union member on the three-person board, also wrote a letter of support.) "A lot of members of the city council are involved with unions," says Bryson, who was active in the organizing campaign. "They heard what we had to say."

Warm summer days provided opportunities for St. Vincent's workers to leaflet at community festivals. On June 24, as part of the nationwide *7 Days in June* campaign, more than 500 union members, community activists and elected officials attended a community forum to hear St. Vincent's workers tell their stories of forced closed-door sessions with supervisors and other obstacles to exercising their freedom to choose a union.

"Hospital workers at St. Vincent resisted a very aggressive effort by their employer in order to stand up for their right to collective bargaining," says UAW President Stephen Yokich.

"Now that the campaign is over, we look forward to a partnership with St. Vincent to improve working conditions for hospital workers."

By encouraging communication between the community and the St. Vincent's employees, workers created an interlocking web of support for their organizing efforts. "The issue for employees was never wages," says UAW organizer Georgia Camp. "It was maintaining the quality of care. That issue appealed to the community."

CASE STUDY 2

Bringing the community on board

When machine operator Jose Leon looked around his workplace, DCM in Cleveland, he says he knew something was not right. People who did the same job got paid different amounts. Workers who didn't speak English well never seemed to get a raise. No one had any job security. "We started looking at how we could improve our working conditions, and we agreed that it was only with a union," he says. "We knew we could not do it alone."

In March 1998, Leon and a majority of the 250 workers at two Cleveland manufacturing firms owned by Dreison International, Supertrapp and DCM, voted to join UNITE to address low pay and safety problems. But although the National Labor Relations Board ordered the company to bargain with the union, the company refused. The workers, many of them immigrants from Latin America and Eastern Europe, then enlisted community support to ensure their voices would be heard.

With the help of the Cleveland AFL-CIO

Federation of Labor and the local Jobs with Justice chapter, the union held a rally at the plant gate, inviting members of the community, including a local Catholic parish that brought students. Jobs with Justice also collected postcards to management demanding recognition for the workers and sponsored a community dinner for workers and their supporters, while the central labor council held an awards ceremony and party to commemorate the anniversary of the organizing victory.

Bringing the community on board gave the workers the critical boost they needed. "The struggle was fought and won by the workers," says Steve Cagan, coordinator of Cleveland Jobs with Justice. "But Cleveland Jobs with Justice aided the workers by helping to maintain morale, both by establishing personal contacts with the workers and by showing them that there was active community support for their struggle, while our public activities helped keep the issue in the spotlight."

Like their brothers and sisters in Toledo, union members in Cleveland mobilize for political action, and in 1997, they endorsed pro-union city councilman Nelson Cintron. Cintron, a former member of UAW Local 1936 and a shop steward with Teamsters Local 52, already had shown his commitment to workers' rights when he joined a delegation to the owner of Peterson Nuts, where employees eventually won their organizing campaign with Food and Commercial Workers. When Cintron saw that Dreison workers were having trouble getting

their employer to respect their wishes to bargain for a union contract, he introduced a council resolution recommending that the city suspend the lucrative tax abatements it had extended to the company if Dreison did not recognize the workers' rights. In September, with workers packing the chambers, the council voted unanimously to support the resolution. The next day, the mayor warned the company that he would make good on the legislators' recommendation. Days later, the company agreed to obey the law and begin bargaining. "When elected officials get involved, the public sees that the workers are not alone, and



Strong support: UAW President Stephen Yokich praises the workers at St. Vincent's for standing up for a voice at work.



Communitywide action: Through community and political action, workers at Dreison joined UNITE and now are bargaining a first contract.

then they get involved. That's when you have a working union," Cintron says.

Dreison workers, who now are bargaining their first contract, say Cintron's involvement, along with that of other sympathetic council members, was a critical point in their victory. "When we saw that other people were helping, that encouraged us to keep fighting," says Leon, referring to the plant gate rally and other support from local union members. "Some people are afraid of getting involved in union activities. When they see others, they feel less afraid. It pulls people back into the battle."

CASE STUDY 3

Union member-volunteers

Managers at Southwest Gas in Arizona used a tactic common in employers' efforts to intimidate workers trying to form a union: They fired an employee active in organizing efforts only two weeks before the union election. But when Sallie Hicks, a 20-year veteran at the company and a mother of two, was fired, the action galvanized union and community allies to fight even harder. In May, the majority of the 507 workers voted to join Electrical Workers Local 769.

Backed by the Arizona State AFL-CIO, the Central Arizona Labor Council and IBEW, organizers had laid the groundwork for the campaign with house calls and meetings. Leaders recognized that the clerical workers, most of them women, were especially vulnerable to management attempts to hold captive audience meetings and electronic monitoring of their customer service calls because technicians, most of them male, spent more time away from the office and in the field than the women workers. So, they enlisted the support of the local chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, an AFL-CIO constituency group.

CLUW members leafleted the building, inviting the women workers at Southwest Gas to an informational meeting at a nearby

HOW FAR WILL EMPLOYERS GO?

Some employers will stop at nothing to intimidate workers seeking a voice at work—even committing them to mental institutions.

In July, Gary McClain, a worker at a Tenneco Packaging plant in Aiken, S.C., stood up at his employer's captive audience meeting and suggested the union that workers are seeking to join, Operating Engineers Local 470, be given equal time to address the employees.

As first reported in an article in the *International Operating Engineer*, the plant manager told McClain to sit down and shut up. But a few days later, as McClain was driving to work, county sheriff's deputies pulled him over at gunpoint and handcuffed him. They committed him against his will to a mental institution, where he was held for two weeks and released only after a psychiatrist found no symptoms of mental illness.

An investigation in the *Augusta (S.C.) Journal* showed that sheriff's deputies used information supplied by the company, which asked for a mental evaluation.

McClain, who is suing the company and the sheriff's department, is not speaking about his case. But before he launched the lawsuit, McClain told the OE magazine he refuses to agree to Tenneco's demands that he submit to a psychiatric exam by a company doctor before he can return to work.

"It is truly mind-boggling that such a thing can still happen in this country in this day and age," says Frank Hanley, OE's general president. "We all know of the usual tactics employed to thwart organizing efforts, but this situation takes anti-union sentiments to the extreme." ☐

hotel, where they were joined by women members of IBEW locals 266 and 387 who work at the utility company's Salt River Project. Also at the meeting were women from CWA locals 7019 and 7050 who work for US West, and OPEIU Local 56 members, demonstrating to the workers that they were not

alone in their struggle for a voice at work. "They saw people who looked like them talking about what their union meant to them," says Rebekah Friend, president of CLUW's Maricopa County chapter. "CLUW can reach women—both union and nonunion—who often aren't reached through the existing structure of local unions," says CLUW President Gloria Johnson of IUE.

CLUW also was instrumental in helping Hicks find a union job after she was fired—the spark that triggered a rapid mobilization of 200 workers to a rally where marchers formed a human ring around Southwest Gas headquarters in Phoenix. Some marchers came from as far as 100 miles away. Members and retirees from more than 15 unions showed their support, as did members of the community group Citizen Action, an environmental and consumer rights organization with longtime strong ties to unions. "The coalition-building lets people know they are not alone," says Jeff Carpenter, a corrosion specialist at Southwest Gas. "You see that it's not just you" fighting for a voice at work—"there are people outside your workplace who care." ☐

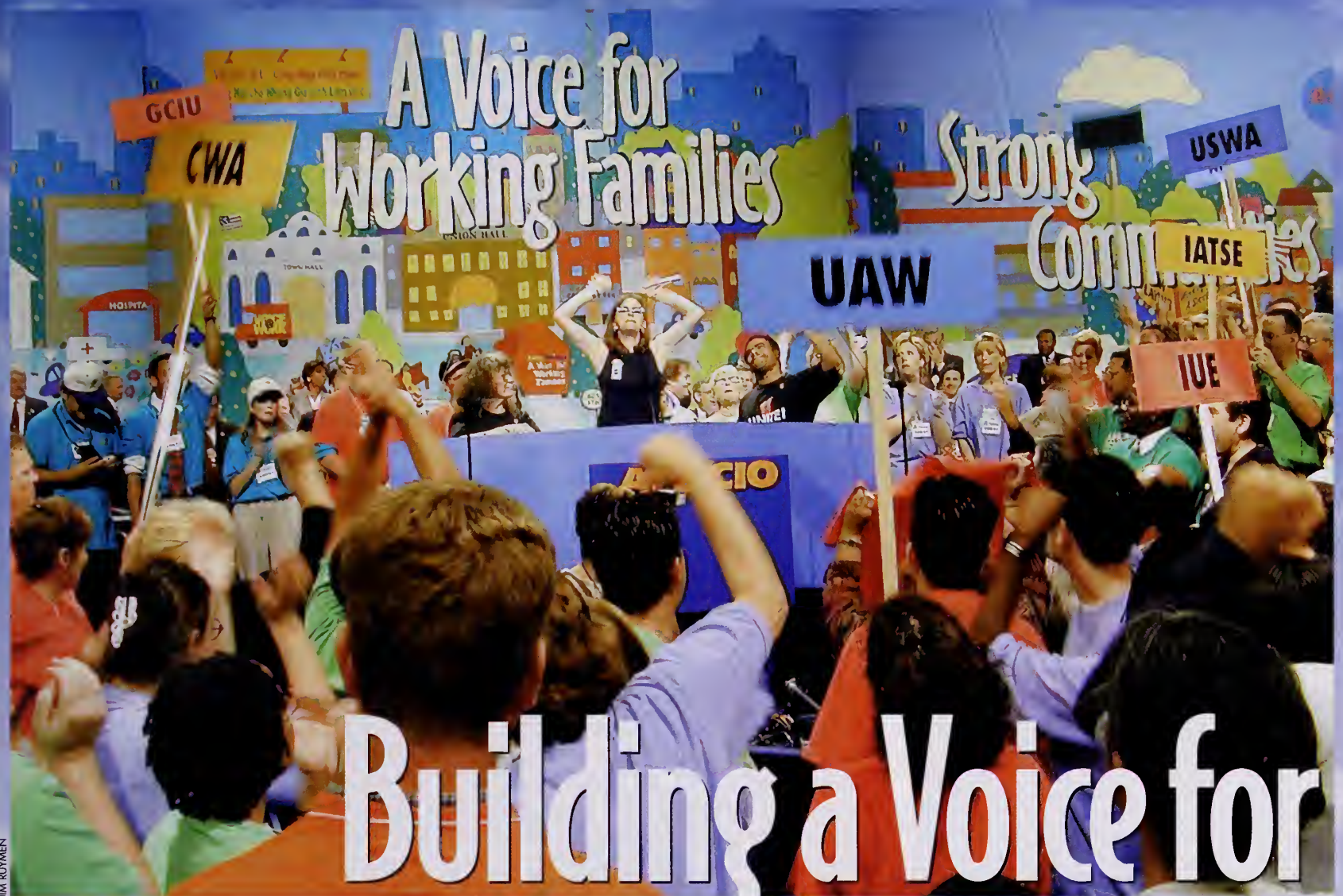
ODDS ARE 9-1 EMPLOYERS WILL STRONG ARM WORKERS



Some 91 percent of employers, when faced with workers who want to join together in a union, require workers to attend mandatory

meetings to hear anti-union diatribes; 80 percent require immediate supervisors to attend training sessions on how to attack unions; and 79 percent require supervisors to deliver anti-union messages to workers they oversee, according to Cornell University Prof. Kate Bronfenbrenner. But when those struggling to organize unions reach out to the community around them and enlist the support of other union members, clergy, elected officials and neighborhood leaders, there's a better chance workers' choices will be respected. ☐

By MIKE HALL and JAMES B. PARKS



Building a Voice for

Working Families in the 21st Century

Nearly 1,000 delegates explored new initiatives for building good jobs, strong communities and a voice for working families at the AFL-CIO's 23rd Biennial Convention in Los Angeles Oct. 11-13. Delegates agreed to form a New Alliance among central labor councils, state federations and the national AFL-CIO; approved a new union Internet community; voted to step up organizing efforts; and vowed to elect a pro-working family majority in the U.S. House and a president who supports working families.



Building bridges:
UNITE members
took part in a
three-day labor-
religion forum.

In conjunction with the convention, nearly 10,000 L.A. union members and their families took part in the AFL-CIO's Working Families Convocation, and union and religious activists joined together at a three-day labor-religion conference and took part in more than a dozen Labor in the Pulpits events.



Fighter for justice:
CWA President Morton
Bahr applauds as Irena
Kirkland accepts an
award for President
Emeritus Lane Kirkland.

Good jobs and strong communities

Francesco Lopez and his co-workers at Quincy Farms in Florida wanted a union because they faced "bad conditions, safety problems and low wages."

"With a union, we can make these things better,"

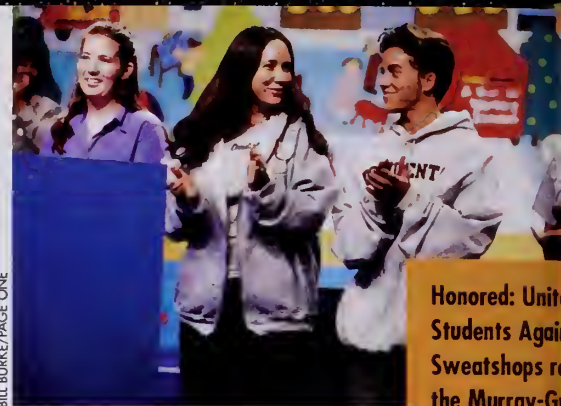
Lopez, a member of the Farm Workers, told delegates. He was one of the nearly 800 newly organized workers greeted by the delegates as they shouted, "Union Yes," to welcome the new union members.

To make organizing the top priority throughout the federation, delegates voted to intensify the change-to-organize process at every level and to call on unions to intensify "shifting resources to organizing, recruiting and training organizers and involving members, developing a winning plan," said Laborers President Arthur Coia, co-chair of the AFL-CIO Executive Council's Organizing Committee.

"We will target major organizing opportunities where we are strong, while also reaching out in new ways to workers in emerging industries," said SEIU President Andrew Stern, Organizing Committee co-chair.

The convention endorsed a *Voice@Work* campaign to educate the public about the importance of unions and the harassment workers face when trying to form a union (see story, page 14). The campaign also will hold public officials accountable for supporting workers' freedom to choose union membership.

These new movementwide programs are what unions need to succeed in the future, President John Sweeney said in his keynote address. "We have taught ourselves to win



Honored: Unite
Students Against
Sweatshops re-
ceive the Murray-
Gr Meany-Kirkland
Award for excel-
lent humanitarian s

again by bringing in 475,000 new members" since the 1997 convention, he said. "But we have much work ahead to complete our task, and we must be willing to work across union and geographical lines to change our movement and our nation."

Good jobs and the global economy

After hearing reports on the oppression of Mexican workers and on the great inequities of the global economy, delegates called for new rules to make the world economy more equitable, approved strategies to provide a new voice for workers in a changing economy and honored those who fight for global justice.

Today, maquila workers make an average of 85 cents per hour for a 40- to 48-hour workweek and receive virtually no benefits, AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson told delegates, reporting on the findings of a delegation she led to Tijuana, Mexico, prior to the convention. The delegation saw firsthand the gross inequity of the global economy when they visited the Vega family, three generations of 28 people living near Tijuana. The family supports itself on a total income of about \$300 per week earned by six family members who work for transnational companies in Mexico's maquiladoras. The family lives in a house built from the packing crates of the products they produce, without plumbing.

Teach-in: A UCLA gathering brought together students, lawmakers and members of unions and the community.



The same race to the bottom illustrated by the Vegas' struggle also has destroyed jobs in the United States, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka said. He urged working families to fight back by going to Seattle Nov. 30 to tell ministers and heads of state at the World Trade Organization meeting that the global economy must be changed to protect workers' rights.

Delegates called for those new rules and reaffirmed that the most effective way to give workers a voice is by organizing more workers into unions.

The convention also honored fighters for global justice. The re-named George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award was given posthumously to President Emeritus Kirkland. The 1999 Murray-Green-Meany-Kirkland Award for humanitarian service was presented to United Students Against Sweatshops.



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

Change to organize: Delegates welcomed nearly 800 newly organized workers.

Changing to meet the needs of a changing workforce

Looking to the future, convention delegates addressed how the union movement can change to meet the needs of a new workforce with a growing number of women, minorities, immigrants and older Americans.

A Celebration of Working Families

Nearly 10,000 working family members—including 1,000 children—joined Tipper Gore, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, worker-friendly lawmakers, Mariachi musicians, Japanese drummers and Pokémon's Pikachu for the AFL-CIO's Working Family Convocation and Rally Oct. 9.

The unique celebration of workers at the Los Angeles Convention Center was an organizing rally, music fest and great opportunity for workers and their families to mingle.

Kiki and Martin Jurado brought their five children because, "they have grown up with the union and we wanted them to see what the union can do for them," said Kiki, an AFSCME Local 3634 member.

Dozens of unions set up tables and booths around the hall to explain their programs and benefits and to mobilize members for organizing and politics. Children mingled with such costumed characters as Pikachu, and played on a moon bounce and giant 50-foot caterpillar and slide.

Launched at the convocation and operating throughout the convention, a 12-computer terminal Cyber Café hooked working families to the Internet and a preview of workingfamilies.com, the new Internet community for union members. Rae Sanborn, retired Electrical Workers Local 47 business agent, was one of hundreds of union members who stopped by the Cyber Café to e-mail his congressional delegation a message urging them to strengthen Social Security and Medicare. @



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

Lots of laughs: Nearly 1,000 children took part in the AFL-CIO Working Families Convocation.



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

Family fun: Pokémon's Pikachu was a big hit at the Saturday event.



Strong support:
AFL President James
R. Hoffa praised
Teamsters' solidarity
in standing against
union-busting tactics
at Overnite
Transportation.



KAHEH SANDARI/PAGE ONE

To create a more effective movement, delegates approved the first major structural change in the AFL-CIO in nearly 50 years. The New Alliance was the result of hundreds of discussions the AFL-CIO Executive Council's Committee 2000 took

part in with union members and leaders at every level of the union movement over the past two years; through these one-on-one meetings and discussions, the Committee

2000 sought to determine how to boost the effectiveness of state and local bodies (see *America@work*, June 1999).

Recognizing that discrimination still exists in the workplace, the delegates also passed resolutions in support of affirmative action coupled with strong laws and sufficient resources to enable civil rights enforcement agencies to do their jobs.

The convention further committed the AFL-CIO to continuing to fight attacks on



Labor in the Pulpits:
AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer Bill Lucy addresses the West Angeles Church of God in Christ.

KAHEH SANDARI/PAGE ONE

Angeles, Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson said Pope John Paul II teaches that the church "puts the dignity of the person at the center of her social messages."

At Temple Isaiah, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka said, "by working together and speaking the truth, we are a compelling chorus."

Other Executive Council members who spoke at L.A.-area congregations include: President John Sweeney, Clayola Brown of UNITE, IUE President Edward Fire, Building and Construction Trades President Robert Georgine, School Administrators President Joe Greene, Gloria Johnson of IUE, Leon Lynch of the Steelworkers, AFSCME President Gerald McEntee, Farm Workers President Arturo Rodriguez, SEIU President Andrew Stern and Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees President John Wilhelm.

Ensuring that new bonds between unions and religious communities bring economic justice for American workers was the theme behind the first-ever joint conference between religious and union activists. More than 200 delegates attended the three-day conference, *Forging Partnerships for the New Millennium*, which was co-sponsored by the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice and the AFL-CIO. The conference gave delegates a chance to hear from longtime religious leaders and join in workshops to plan strategies for forming partnerships with poultry workers, farm workers and other groups struggling for justice. Culminating the conference, participants announced new joint religion-union strategies to help workers across the country who seek a voice on the job. @

Religious Community, Unions Explore Common Bonds

The union movement and the religious community reached out to each other with two major events during the AFL-CIO's 23rd Biennial Convention.

Over the Oct. 8-10 weekend, 14 federation Executive Council members and officers visited places of worship at 13 Labor in the Pulpits events in Los Angeles, bringing the voice of working families from the pulpits to more than 8,000 people in the Los Angeles faith community.

"The church and unions share joint responsibility to improve the quality of life of people," AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer William Lucy told more than 2,400 members of the congregation at West Angeles Church of God in Christ.

Speaking before a packed congregation at La Placita, the oldest church in Los

Faith and justice: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka talks with congregants of Temple Isaiah.



JIM RUYMEN

workers' safety and help affiliates bargain for safer workplaces.

To create a stronger movement, delegates voted to engage older workers and retired and young workers in rebuilding the union movement and to reach out to communities with the message that unions are champions for all working families, organized and unorganized. They also established the Union Community Fund that enables working people to respond collectively to communities' needs through financial support and volunteerism.

Delegates also supported such initiatives as the capital stewardship program, the Working for America Institute and the National Labor College, (see *America @work*, October 1999). They also paved the way for *workingfamilies.com*, a new union Internet community through which union families can gain access to a wide range of Internet services to give them stronger voices in their workplaces, their communities and in their government, and provide unions new tools for communicating and mobilizing.



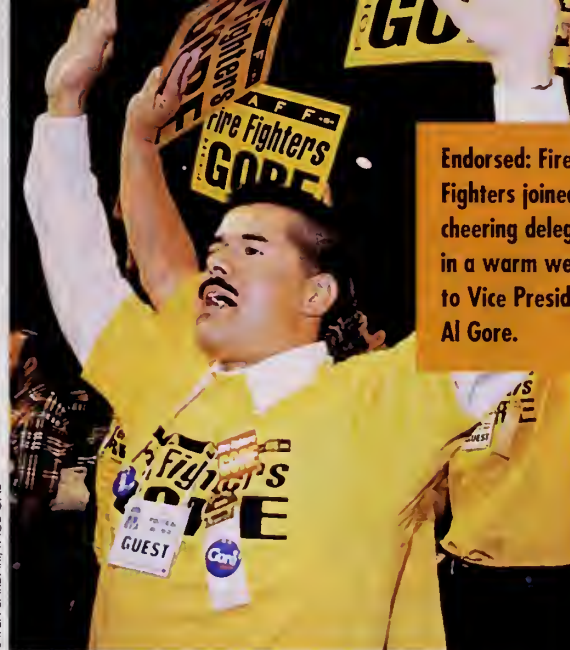
CyberCafe: AFL-CIO delegates had access to e-mail and the Internet.

Making government work for working families

Delegates examined ways to gain a voice in government and legislation, determined how national, state and local lawmakers can ensure economic and social justice and developed strategies to shape the American economy for a new century.

One of the most important ways government can boost working families is to ensure workers have the freedom to use a voice at work; in a speech to the convention, Vice President Al Gore promised he would fight for that voice. Prior to Gore's appearance, delegates approved an Executive Council resolution endorsing Gore in his presidential bid as the best means to advance the issues and concerns of working families. The Teamsters and UAW opposed the resolution, calling for more time for members to consider the action.

KAVEH SARDARI/PAGE ONE



Endorsed: Fire Fighters joined cheering delegates in a warm welcome to Vice President Al Gore.

The delegates committed the AFL-CIO to intensify its efforts to educate and mobilize union members around issues of economic justice and called upon unions to fight for ways to make it easier for workers to balance work life with family life.

The convention reaffirmed the need for accessible, affordable health care for all Americans and vowed to fight for universal access to coverage, secure financing for Medicare and Medicaid and a strong Social Security and national pension system for all workers.

One of the high points came as delegates honored longtime UNITE lobbyist Evelyn Dubrow, winner of the presidential Medal of Freedom. More than 700 union political activists and 70 union members who hold political office also were honored for making government work for working families. @

KAVEH SARDARI/PAGE ONE

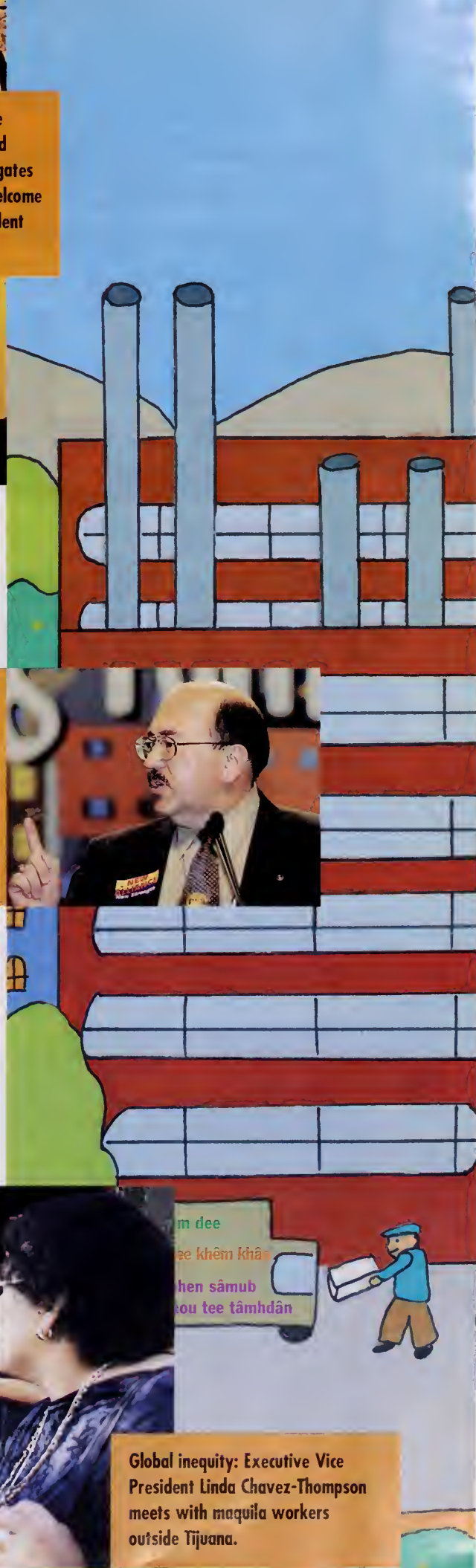
New Alliance: IAM President Thomas Buffenbarger chaired the committee that heard input on restructuring union work.



VIRGINIA HUNTER



Global inequity: Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson meets with maquila workers outside Tijuana.





Union Collectibles ON THE WEB

Collectors of union pins, signs, banners, photographs and other historical memorabilia now can add to their mementos by clicking on eBay and similar forms of electronic commerce.

Internet auction sites offer a wide array of items. A recent perusal of eBay, one of the largest sites, turned up 167 union collectibles—including a 1902 Locomotive Engineers horse pin, a 1940 broadside supporting a CIO civil rights boycott of American Tobacco Co., a 1922 Master Horse Shoers ribbon, a 1910 Boot and Shoe Workers tape measure and a 1902 Teamsters initiation card. The bidding often starts at well under \$10.

To browse eBay's offerings, go to its site at www.ebay.com, click on "collectibles," scroll down to "fraternal groups" and click on "trade union." ☐

Some People Got Nerve

Sharon Cornu, communications director for the California Federation of Labor, received what she thought at first was a routine phone inquiry last August. The woman asked for information about a state legislative bill from several years past that allowed workers to leave at different hours to beat traffic. But something wasn't quite right about the query.

"She called herself Tracy," says Cornu. "She was real cagey, no last name or company." Tracy also wanted to know whether the federation and the Golden State's unions sponsored the bill. Cornu, suspicious but curious, said she'd get back to Tracy No-Name.

Cornu then dialed the "return call" feature on her phone, and learned that Tracy was an employee of the anti-union law firm Littler Mendelson. Cornu says the law firm has sent its hired-gun union busters to

battle against SEIU's Justice for Janitors campaign in Sacramento and other cities. The firm is a consultant to Hill House Nursing Home in San Francisco and has a major presence in the state legislature fighting against worker-friendly legislation and lobbying hard for its corporate cronies.

Cornu and other union leaders guessed that Littler Mendelson was trying to find a way to use some of the bill's flex-time provisions to weasel around California's just-reinstated eight-hour day overtime law.

Cornu called Tracy and said the state fed would be happy to help—for a fee. "We quoted them our regular hourly rates, plus back pay, full benefits and punitive damages for every worker they've ever gotten fired." She hasn't heard back. ☐

UNION LINE



Keeping Cool and Staying Warm with Union Products

If this is the year you need a new furnace, boiler, heat pump, baseboard or wall heater, air conditioner, gas stove or even a stovepipe, check out the quality of these products first, made by members of the Boilermakers, IUE, Machinists, Steelworkers, Teamsters and the UAW.

Home furnaces, air conditioners and heat pumps:

Air Pro, Armstrong, Bryant, Burnham Boilers, Carrier, Coleman Evcon, Comfortmaker, Empire, Empire Comfort,

GE Zoneline, Guardian, Heil, Lennox, Payne, Quantum, Rheem, Tempstar, York.

Other equipment:

Cozy brand wall, floor and console gas stoves by Louisville Tin & Stove; gas stoves and logs by Empire Comfort Systems; baseboard and panel heaters by Embassy Industries; gas, wood, coal and pellet stoves by United States Stove Co., strip and duct heaters by Delta Flo Mfg. Co.; and stove pipe, chimney caps and hearth accessories by GSW Jackes Evans Mfg. Co. ☐

EXHIBITS

Sweatshop History

"Between a Rock and a Hard Place: A History of American Sweatshops, 1820–Present" runs through March 2000 at the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. It examines the origins of sweatshop production and the reasons why sweatshops still exist today. Included are photographs of sweatshops from 1900 to the present, an immigrant's suitcase and material from the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Co. fire of 1911. Exhibit sponsors include the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History and UNITE. For more information, contact the Wiesenthal Center at 310-553-9036.

**UMWA Highlights Ludlow Massacre**

University of Denver anthropologists are bringing labor history to high school classrooms with a traveling exhibition on the bloody 1913–1914 Colorado coal strike against CF&I that culminated with the April 20, 1914, Ludlow Massacre in Trinidad, Colo. The exhibit, which includes artifacts unearthed from the Ludlow site, has traveled to a Steelworkers meeting in Pueblo, Colo., where some 1,100 members have been on strike against the same company—CF&I/Oregon Steel—since October 1997.

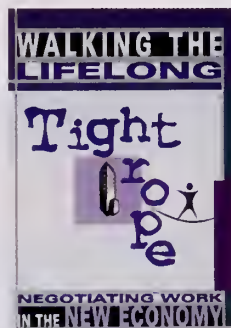
In 1913, 10,000 coal miners organizing with the Mine Workers lived with their families in a dozen tent colonies after striking the Rockefeller-owned CF&I for union recognition and better pay and benefits. Sixty-six people were killed

during the Ludlow strike, including seven miners, two women and 11 children who were gunned down by the Colorado National Guard. For information on the exhibit and its availability, contact Mark Walker at 303-871-2000 or e-mail to markwalk@du.edu.

The Anthropology Department also assembled a permanent outdoor kiosk exhibit that was dedicated at the Mine Workers' Ludlow Monument last summer, and held institutes for grade school and high school teachers. For more information, visit coloradodigital.coalliance.org/cfintro.html. ☐

PUBLICATIONS

Walking the Lifelong Tightrope: Negotiating Work in the New Economy, by Chris Benner, Bob Brownstein and Amy B. Dean, takes a look at working conditions in California and explains how growing job insecurity and income inequality are trends that portend a bleak future for most workers in the state. The report, which notes that 40 percent of the state's new jobs created in the next 10 years will pay less than \$10 an hour, calls for a new social contract to guarantee that prosperity is shared equitably. Authors Benner and Brownstein are with Working Partnerships USA, a nonprofit foundation. Dean is the executive officer of the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council. \$9. For more information, call 408-269-7872 or e-mail: wputa@atwork.org.

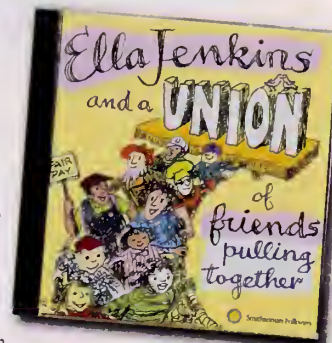


Living Wage Campaigns: An Activist's Guide to Building a Movement for Economic Justice, by David Reynolds in conjunction with ACORN National Living Wage Resource Center. The guide profiles recent campaigns in cities such as Los Angeles and includes sample ordinances, testimony, fliers and op-ed pieces. \$12. To order, call 202-547-2500; fax: 202-546-2483; or check out the website: www.acorn.org. ☐

MUSIC

Ella Jenkins and a Union of Friends Pulling Together

introduces children to the ideas of unity, cooperation and unions through songs, recitations and poetry. Produced by the Smithsonian Institution's Folkways Records, the recording is suitable for children ages 4–12, and includes such favorites as "Solidarity Forever" and "If I Had a Hammer." \$14 for the CD; \$8.50 for cassette recording or LP record. To order, call 1-800-410-9815, or visit the website at www.si.edu/folkways/45043.htm. ☐



VIDEO

"Global Village or Global Pillage?"

a video documentary narrated by Edward Asner, premiered in Seattle as part of activists' actions at the World Trade Organization meeting, explores how the global economy affects working people. The film shows the constructive ways working people around the world are addressing the impact of globalization on their communities, workplaces and environments. Through a video tapestry of local and transnational activities, interviews, music and animation, "Global Village" shows workers can empower themselves to benefit from the global economy through grassroots organizing and international support. The video includes interviews with anti-sweatshop activist Charles Kernaghan and Thea Lee of the AFL-CIO Public Policy Department. \$25 or \$10 for students from the World Economy Project, Preamble Center, 1737 21st St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. Call 202-265-3263, ext. 330; fax: 202-234-0981; or e-mail: wep@preamble.org. ☐



What have unions done for working people in the past

100 years?

Just a few little things:

The eight-hour day

The weekend

Fair wages

Social Security

The minimum wage

Workers' compensation

A ban on child labor

Public education for *all* kids

Civil rights

Unemployment compensation

Pensions

Health insurance

Job safety

Family and Medical Leave

Training, apprenticeships and scholarships

Community services

And more....

Imagine what's coming
in the *next* 100 years!

